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THIRD LETTER

TO THE

REV. WILLIAM E. CHANNING,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

UNITARIANISM.

.....
BY SAMUEL WORCESTER, D.D.

PASTOR OF THE TABERNACLE CHURCH, SALEM.
.....



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LETTER.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I FIND that you have seen fit to make to the publick another set of remarks about me, and about other persons and things in connexion with me. I did hope, if you should condescend to write again, it would not be in the style of a murmurer and complainer; or of a popular suiter and declaimer. If the "self-respect" and "virtuous indignation," of which you have so emphatically spoken, required you to turn your back upon your opponent, and to refuse to him the offices, not only of brotherly kindness, but of common civility; yet it might have been well, had they not withheld you also from attending to the points which essentially belong to the debate, which have been distinctly stated and urged, and which certainly merit very serious and candid consideration and discussion. Those, however, are virtues it should seem of no ordinary loftiness and inflexibility, and of no ordinary claims and prerogatives.

On the question of writing again, several considerations have presented themselves to my mind. My Second Letter seems to need no vindication or support; as your Remarks have not I suppose, to any one, even the *appearance* of an answer. My labours and duties are many, and my health is frail. A considerable portion of the publick are probably desirous that the controversy should cease: as a large class have not patience to attend long to any subject which requires serious thought; not a few have an imposing prejudice against all religious debate, and a morbid dread of this discussion in particular; as if religious truth, and such especially as relates directly to the redemption of mankind, and the person and kingdom of the Redeemer, ought not to be developed or defended: and not a little influence is exerted to prevent people from reading—more than one side.—Still

however there are many who do read and will read both sides. The points in discussion are among the most important, that could be offered to the attention of the christian community. Though some ill effects may ensue, as, in a world like this, is always to be expected, when any thing is attempted for the cause of truth; yet the persuasion, I believe, is continually extending and gaining strength, that the good effects will greatly preponderate. And though I have been accused of being a volunteer in this service, as I would certainly wish to be, in a cause so deeply interesting to the honour and kingdom of the Lord Jesus; yet as I have girded on the harness, whether prudently or imprudently, the time does not seem to have arrived for me to put it off.—What I have now to offer will be disposed under several distinct heads.

I. In the outset of your Remarks, you re-urge the charge of “bad spirit and intention.” To this I am compelled briefly to reply.—My conscience bears me witness, that my design has been not to excite popular or party passions and animosities, already in a flame when I first took my pen, but to assuage them; not to promote a violent disruption, or an irregular denunciation in the christian community, but to give such a direction to the controversy, as would lead to sober and conscientious inquiry, and to a right understanding of truth and of duty. It has long been well known, that I have not been the advocate of rash measures, of hasty separations, or of a rigorously restricted system of fellowship. You have yourself been pleased to say, that you had “regarded me as a man of candour, moderation, and liberal feelings.” Though you have seen fit to alter your opinion, and to represent me as a man destitute of candour, and possessed of a bitter, malignant, and persecuting spirit; yet I suppose it will be obvious to others, if not to yourself, that this latter opinion has been formed under circumstances not the most favourable to an impartial and correct judgment; and I am sustained in the confidence, that candid men will pronounce, that for your sudden change of opinion, and your consequent criminations, so hastily expressed, and so pertinaciously reiterated, you had no sufficient reason.

To a candour, indeed, which confounds the distinction between truth and error,—to a moderation which regards both the one and the other, as of little consequence,—to a liberality which places them on equal terms, in regard to christian character and christian communion, I make no pretensions. I do hold, that belief in the truth is essential to christianity; and that “the church of the living God, which is the pillar and ground of the truth,” and the ministers of Jesus Christ, who are “set for the defence of the gospel,” have not only a right to inquire, but are under obligations of infinite responsibility to inquire, concerning the faith as well as the practice of individuals and communities, claiming christian fellowship:—to inquire, however, with candour, and meekness, and charity, making a difference between ignorance and disbelief, and between circumstantial errors, and fundamental. This is my heinous offence,—my unpardonable crime. It is on account of this persuasion, that you have “considered my letter unworthy of me as a christian and a christian minister,” and “thought that I have discovered a strange insensibility towards my brethren,” and written with a bad spirit and intention. I say, this is the reason of your abundant criminations of me: for you have pointed to no other, but to this you have distinctly and repeatedly pointed.

What you think of me, or what I think of you, is in itself of little importance to the publick, and can have nothing to do with the merits of the cause in debate. It may be, however, of considerable consequence, to remark the grounds on which you are so ready to pronounce a man to be destitute of candour, and charity, and all good motives and feelings, and to impute to him a bitter, malignant, and persecuting spirit; as it may serve to explain the nature of that charity on which you lay so great a stress, and to which you make such lofty pretensions. Let it here then be distinctly noted, that, according to your representations, if a man demur as to christian fellowship, on account of any error in sentiment, he is destitute of charity, and a persecutor; if he regard no error as any bar to fellowship, he is a charitable man, and a liberal christian. This topick I shall have occasion to consider further in another place.

II. You give it to be understood, that the reason of your appearing again before the publick, was my call upon you to retract a misstatement. You had stated that "the obvious import of the concluding part of" my first "Letter might be thus expressed: 'Every man who cannot admit as a doctrine of scripture, the great doctrine of three persons in one God, which I and other orthodox christians embrace, believes an opposite gospel, rejects the true gospel, despises the authority of Jesus Christ, is of course a man wholly wanting in true piety and without christian virtue; and may in perfect consistency with christian love be rejected as unworthy the name of a christian.'" I did pronounce this "a flagrant misstatement," and solemnly call upon you to retract it. In reply you say. "I intend to shew, that in giving this interpretation, I followed the natural meaning of Dr. Worcester's words, that I put no violence on his language, and that no other sense would have offered itself to an unprejudiced mind." You then proceed to "state the passages" of my letter "which led to the representation which you had formed."

I did propose to requote all those passages in their order, for the sake of shewing in a strong light the strange state of that mind which could assert, and in the face of the clear exposition of my sentiments and views, given in my Second Letter, reassert, that "the natural meaning" of them is given in your contested statement. But I feel a strong repugnance to filling the pages of my present letter with quotations from my former ones; and a repugnance, not less strong, to bestowing so much attention upon a point so personal. One principal passage, therefore, may suffice. "Is it," I ask in my first Letter, p. 32, "Is it then a violation of the great law of love for the friends of truth to decline communion with its rejecters?—We have nothing to do here with slight diversities of opinion; with differences about modes or forms, or inconsiderable points of faith or practice. Our concern is with differences of a radical and fundamental nature; such as exist between orthodox christians and Unitarians of all degrees, even down to the creed of Mr. Belsham: for to this point you have yourself fairly reduced the present question.—Yes, Sir, the simple point here at issue is, Whether it be a violation of

the law of love for believers in the true gospel of Jesus Christ to separate from believers in another and an opposite gospel? If yours is the true gospel, then ours is another; if ours is the true gospel, then yours is another. In either case, the great question respecting fellowship remains the same." This is the passage on which you seem mainly to rely; and it is undoubtedly the strongest passage of the whole, and includes in it the principal ideas, of any aspect to your purpose, contained in the rest.—But, Sir, do I here say, that "*Every man who cannot admit as a doctrine of scripture, the great doctrine of three persons in one God, which I and other orthodox christians embrace, believes an opposite gospel, rejects the true gospel, despises the authority of Jesus Christ, and is, of course, a man wholly wanting in true piety and without christian virtue!*" Is this "the natural meaning of the words?" and does no other sense offer itself to an unprejudiced mind?" I put the question, Sir, to your conscience.

Please to observe. In the first place, in this passage, I state the question at issue: "Is it a violation of the great law of love for the friends of truth to decline communion with its rejecters?"—I then, that the question may be disembarassed, state by way of explication, that "We have nothing to do here with slight diversities of opinion; with differences about modes or forms, or inconsiderable points of faith or practice:" such as those might be thought to be, which exist between orthodox christians and some whom you would call the higher Unitarians. "Our concern," I further observe, "is with differences of a radical and fundamental nature; such as exist between orthodox christians and Unitarians of all degrees, even down to the creed of Mr. Belsham: for to this point you have yourself fairly reduced the present question." You certainly had reduced it to this point. You had contended, that Unitarians, not of the higher degrees only, but even of the lowest degrees, ought to be held in christian fellowship. I therefore, fixed upon Mr. Belsham's creed, as something tangible and definite, by means of which the merits of the pending question might be tried; and, reduced to this point, the question, which otherwise might have been attended with embarrassment and perplexity, became to my mind a very

plain one. Accordingly I had a little before said, "The question then is a short one. Is not Mr. Belsham's gospel, asset forth in his creed, another gospel than that which Paul preached? If you are not willing to admit this; yet surely you cannot hesitate a moment to admit, that it is another than that which is held by orthodox christians,—which is preached by orthodox ministers:—essentially different in every particular from the foundation to the topstone. One or the other of these schemes then must be what St. Paul denominates another gospel, and against which and its abettors he solemnly pronounces his apostolick anathema." To this statement I distinctly refer in the passage under consideration. Having thus simplified the question respecting fellowship, by restricting it to Mr. Belsham's scheme, I then proceed to restate it in these words: "Yes, Sir, the simple point here at issue is, whether it be a violation of the law of love for believers in the true gospel of Jesus Christ to separate from believers in another and an opposite gospel. If yours is the true gospel, then ours is another; if ours is the true gospel, then yours is another. In either case the great question respecting fellowship remains the same."—Was it possible for the question to have been more clearly or definitely stated? Was it possible for it to have been more plainly expressed, that the issue to be tried was precisely between *the believers in Mr. Belsham's gospel*, and the believers in that called orthodox? Mr. Belsham's is here called "your gospel, for the very obvious reason, that it is the one which, in the statement of the question, is opposed on *your* part to the one on *our* part."

Now, Sir, I ask again, do I in this passage say, that "*Every man* who cannot admit as a doctrine of scripture, the great doctrine of three persons in one, which I and other orthodox christians embrace, believes in an opposite gospel, rejects the true gospel, despises the authority of Jesus Christ, and is, of course, a man wholly wanting in true piety and without christian virtue." No, Sir: it is not here, or any where else by me, said, that "*every man*" who does not embrace the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity either "believes in," or "abets, an opposite gospel," or "rejects the true gospel, or despises the authority of Jesus Christ," or "is

wholly wanting in christian piety," or is "without christian virtue." Neither of these things is either affirmed or implied in any passage of mine; but the terms used by me, and the entire connexion, are particularly and pointedly guarded against such a construction. Had not *you* said it, I should certainly have thought that the person who could say, that the interpretation which you have given is "the natural meaning of my words," "that in giving such an interpretation no violence is put upon my language," and "that no other sense offers itself to an unprejudiced mind," really had not "ability to decide on the obvious import of a letter written in our native tongue," and ought to be sent to school, to learn the very rudiments of grammar and logick. This remark I apply to all the passages which you have cited. Taken severally or collectively, in a detached state or in their respective connexions, they neither naturally express, nor by all the torture to which you have put, or can put them, can they be made to yield the sense which you have so resolutely attempted to fasten upon them.

Had it, however, been otherwise; had my expressions been such as easily to admit, or even naturally to convey the sense of your statement; yet, if they would bear another construction, and I had explicitly said that such was not my meaning, it might have been compatible with the laws of common courtesy for my disavowal to have been candidly accepted. It has been thought allowable in debate, for a person, when misunderstood, to explain; and right that his explanation should be admitted. But this privilege has not been allowed to me. I was misunderstood,—certainly misrepresented: and though I thought my language sufficiently plain, yet I went, in my Second Letter, into a full and candid exposition of my sentiments and views; and not only said, but shewed, that my meaning was not, and could not have been, such as you had stated. Yet after all this, you take it upon you to say, that you "cannot avoid the belief that my recollections on this point are imperfect;" you resolutely insist on your former interpretation, which I have explicitly disavowed, and refuse to admit my frank exposition of my own meaning. This, Sir, is carrying the claims of your "self respect very far; to an extent,

I believe, beyond what any courteous, and candid, and modest, and honourable man, to say nothing of a christian minister, ever before attempted.

I must here quote from your Remarks an extraordinary passage. “Dr. Worcester, however,” you say, p. 12, “assures me that I have misrepresented him; and I have no disposition to question the sincerity with which he now declares that he did not intend to communicate the sentiments which I ascribed to him. I cannot indeed avoid the belief, that his recollections on this point are imperfect, and that in the hurry of his thoughts and feelings, he was not so watchful over his motives as he now imagines.” In the same style you say, p. 4, “Dr. Worcester, however, disclaims the feelings and intentions which I have ascribed to him.—That he is sincere in reporting what *now* appears to him to have been the state of his mind during the composition of his first letter, I am far from denying. But on a subject like this, memory is sometimes treacherous; and I confess I cannot shake off the conviction, that some improper feelings, perhaps unsuspected by Dr. Worcester, occasionally guided his pen.” Here, Sir, is an expedient to save one’s “self respect” from the pain of a concession, and to fix upon an opponent an injurious charge, the whole credit of which, I do believe, belongs to you, and ought forever to remain in your uncontested possession: an expedient of which, I presume, the annals of controversy might be searched throughout in vain, for an example, a prototype, or a parallel. Will any reader in the world suppose that, in both or either of those instances, I really misremembered?—or that you seriously meant to be understood that I did misremember? Why then this spurious irony,—this wayward circumlocution? Why not charge me directly with falsehood, as you had before done the Reviewers?

You have had, Sir, a fair opportunity for a display of candour. You had misstated the import of an important part of my Letter. This was a different affair from that which was before between us, relating to the Reviewers. That was a question concerning the meaning of a third party, and, therefore, concerning which I as well as you might misjudge; this was a question respecting my own meaning, and respecting

which I could not mistake. I supposed you had wronged the Reviewers; I *knew* you had wronged me. Without, however, imputing to you any ill intention or motive, I remonstrated, explained, and called upon you to retract. It was only, in christian spirit and manner, to acknowledge that you had misapprehended my meaning,—and the credit for ingenuous feeling, especially the consciousness of having done an act of magnanimous equity to an opponent, would have abundantly compensated for any self denial which there might have been in the case. But you have chosen a different course, and must look for a different reward. I can, however, assure you, Sir, that it would have afforded me much greater pleasure to have had occasion to acknowledge your generous candour, than I have found in making the kind of stricture which you have compelled me to make.

III. Page 13, you make this statement. “Dr. Clark believed, that the Father alone is the Supreme God, and that Jesus Christ is not the Supreme God, but derived his being, and all his power and honours from the Father, even by an act of the Father’s power and will. He maintains, that as the scriptures have not taught us the manner in which the Son derived his existence from his Father, it is presumptuous to affirm, that the Son was created, or, that there was a time when he did not exist. On these subjects the word of God has not given us light, and therefore we ought to be silent. The author of Bible News in like manner affirms, that the Father only is the Supreme God, that Jesus is a distinct being from God, and that he derives every thing from his Father. He has some views relating to the “proper Sonship,” of God, which neither liberal nor orthodox christians generally embrace. But the prevalent sentiments of liberal christians seem to me to accord substantially with the systems I have above described, Like Dr. Clark, the majority of this class feel that the scriptures have not taught the mode of Christ’s derivation. They therefore do not call Christ a creature, but leave the subject in the obscurity in which they find it, carrying with them, however, an impression, that the scriptures ascribe to Jesus the character of Son of God in a peculiarly high sense, and in a sense in which it is ascribed to no other being”

Upon this statement I submit the following remarks.

1. The appellation "liberal christians," is ambiguous and indeterminate. In your first pamphlet you tell us, that "liberal christians are scattered through all classes of christians;" and that although "in this part of the country they are generally," yet "by no means universally Unitarians." And you somewhere, I think, estimate that about one third part of the ministers and christian professors in this commonwealth are of the liberal class. I have myself computed, that about this proportion are non-calvinistick; and it should seem that all these are included by you in the denomination of "liberal christians." Of these, however, I have supposed there are many, who are not Unitarians. They may have some difficulties and doubts respecting the terms in which the doctrine of the Trinity is often stated, and some diversities in the manner of conceiving and speaking of the doctrine, and yet believe in the true divinity of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. If so, they ought not to be classed with Unitarians. "Those," as justly observed by Bishop Huntingford, "who hold the doctrine of a Trinity, however individually they may give different explications of it, are nevertheless Trinitarians; as those, who protest against a particular church, although unhappily among themselves they have separated from each other, by multifarious divisions, and discriminate each other by subtle distinctions, implying even dimidiation, are nevertheless all protestants."

Dr. Samuel Clark was not a Unitarian, and ought not to be so called or classed. He held to an "EVER-BLESSED TRINITY,"—to a Trinity of "DIVINE PERSONS,"—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who existed together "FROM THE BEGINNING." This is the *substance* of his scheme; and in this he agreed with orthodox Trinitarians, though in other respects he differed from them. And if, as it "seems" to you "the prevalent sentiments among liberal christians in this quarter of our country accord *substantially* with Dr. Clark's," then these "prevalent sentiments" are not Unitarian. How large a proportion of those whom you would assign to the liberal class, are Trinitarians, or believers in the essential divinity of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, I do not know;

nor do I know in what manner they would severally explain themselves upon this subject, or where they would choose to be considered as standing. I have, however, entertained the hope, that by the process of developement it would be found, that not a few of them are more orthodox than Dr. Clark; and that the Unitarian brotherhood is much less numerous, than you seem desirous of having it understood to be.

2. It appears from your statement, that the "prevalent sentiments of liberal christians" are exceedingly unsettled, indistinct, and indeterminate. "The majority of this class, you say, *feel* that the scriptures have not taught the mode of Christ's derivation. They therefore do not call Christ a creature, but leave the subject in the obscurity in which they find it, carrying with them, however, an impression, that the scriptures ascribe to Jesus the character of Son of God in a peculiarly high sense, and in a sense in which it is ascribed to no other being." With these "liberal christians," then, it is a matter of utter uncertainty, of endless doubt, and, it would seem, of cold and lofty indifference, who the Saviour of the world is!—whether he is a created, or an uncreated being; whether he existed from eternity, or begun to exist in time; whether he is a God, who, though inferiour to the "supreme God," has yet a rightful claim to religious worship, or only their fellow servant, to whom no divine honours belong! From other passages, on which I shall have occasion in another place to remark, it appears that the same uncertainty, and doubt, and indifference exist with these same "liberal christians," in regard to what Jesus Christ has done for them:—whether he died to expiate their sins with blood of inestimable merit, or whether "in consequence" merely "of what he has done and suffered, the punishment of sin is averted from the penitent;" as it may have been, in consequence of the sufferings and labours, the instructions and intercessions of Paul and other good men, by whose means sinners have been brought to repentance!—Of course, there must be similar uncertainty, doubt, and indifference, as to the obligations which they owe to him; as to the love and trust, the thanks and honours to which he is entitled.—Do they then honour the Son, even as they honour, or should honour the

Father? They do not know who or what the Son is. Are they blessed in putting their trust in him? They do not know to what extent, or for what purposes he is to be trusted. Do they delight to join in the heavenly anthem, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing? They do not know that he is worthy thus to be adored and praised!—Ah! where are we? Into what a region of frost, of darkness, of the shadow of death are we advancing!—Is this, Sir, the light which is so ardently hailed, and so loudly proclaimed by the "rational christians," of this favoured age? Is it here that we are to find the grand consummation of divine knowledge, that "purer system of christianity," to which you and your "liberal" brethren would guide mankind? Is it in this chilling, dismal clime, that professed christians of every name are to meet together in one blessed fellowship? No wonder then that Jews and Infidels, Mohammedans and Pagans are invited to participate in the blessedness.* And no wonder, that they who adore the Lord Jesus, as "*the true God and eternal life*," and delight in the ascription, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins, in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father,—to him be glory and dominion forever and ever," should decline the invitation.

"This," says our great Intercessor, "This is the life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and JESUS THE CHRIST whom thou hast sent."† But in the knowledge of Jesus the

* With intimations to this effect, the writings of Unitarians abound.

† "What is said here of the *only true God*, seems said in opposition to the gods whom the heathens worshipped; not in opposition to Jesus Christ himself, who is called the *true God* by John in 1 Epist. v, 20." Bishop Pearce.

"That our blessed Lord here speaks of the *only true God*, in distinction from idols, and not to the exclusion of himself, appears from his speaking of himself as the object of the same fiducial knowledge, with the Father, and by his distinguishing himself from the Father, not by any essential title, but merely by his official character, viz. *Jesus Christ*, whom thou hast sent. And the same apostle who recorded this prayer, expressly says of Christ; *This is the true God, and eternal life*, in opposition to *idols*." Dr. Guise.

"Those who deny the Divine nature of Christ, think they have a mighty argument from this text, where Christ (as they say speaking to his Father) calleth him the only true God. But divines answer, that the term *only*, or *alone*, is not

Christ, must not liberal christians, if your account of them is correct be lamentably wanting?

“The majority of this class,” you say, “feel that the scriptures have not taught the *mode* of Christ’s DERIVATION. And well they may *feel* this: since the scriptures declare, that “his goings forth have been of old, even from EVERLASTING;”—that “in the beginning he was with God, and WAS God;”—that he is “the same yesterday, and to day, and forever,”—“Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, the First and the Last.”—Your oracle indeed, Dr. Clark, has a long section, entitled, “The passages in which he [Christ] is declared to be subordinate to the Father; *deriving his being* (in an incomprehensible manner) *from Him, receiving from him his divine power, authority and other attributes,*” &c. And under this head, in his own imposing manner, he has arranged about two hundred and forty texts; in not one of which, I feel perfectly safe in saying, is it “declared that Christ derived his being and divine attributes from the Father.” It is not then strange, that “the scriptures have not taught the *mode* of his derivation.” And since you *feel* this, it might be well if you would acknowledge what the scriptures do teach,—that as God he existed with the Father from eternity.

Christ and the great work of redemption by him, is the grand subject of the scriptures, from the beginning to the end. Is it then credible, that, after all, the scriptures have not informed us, who or what Christ is,—whether God or a mere creature,—nor what he has done for us, nor how we are to be saved by him, nor what regards and honours are due from us to him? Is it credible, that the inspired writings have left these primary subjects in such “obscurity,” that

to be applied to *thee*, but to the term *God*; and the sense this: to know *thee* to be that *God which is the only true God*; and this appeareth from 1 John v, 20, where *Christ is said to be the true God*, which could not be if the Father were the only true God, considered as another [God] from the Son. The term *only* or *alone* is not exclusive of the other two persons in the Trinity, but only of idols, the gods of the heathen which are no gods.—Our Saviour saith it is *life eternal to know him who is the only true God*;—he adds, *and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent*: by which he lets us know, that the Father cannot be savingly known, but in and by the Son.” Peole’s Continuator.

one man may acknowledge him as God, one and co-equal with the Father, another, only as a mere man, "fallible and peccable like other men," and a third as a demigod, or some unknown intermediate being, between the Creator and creatures,—that some may believe his death to have been an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world, and others that he died only as a witness to the truth,—that some may trust for justification and salvation only in his vicarious merits, and others in their own virtues,—and yet all of them have an equal claim to the name and privileges of christian believers? Is it credible, that in a divine revelation, a principal object of which is to guard mankind against *idolatry*, and to teach them the true worship, the representations are such as to make the great body of christians in every age *idolaters*,—as the fact certainly is, If Christ is not truly God! Surely the man who can believe all this, ought to charge no other man in the world with strange or enormous credulity.

3. "The majority of liberal christians," you say, "carry with them an impression, that the scriptures ascribe to Jesus the character of Son of God in a peculiarly high sense, and in a sense in which it is ascribed to no other being." Great stress is laid by the deniers of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, on this appellation, SON OF GOD: as if it must necessarily denote a separate being, infinitely below the Father, and as if the *sonship* of Christ were denied by Trinitarians. Neither the one nor the other of these assumptions is admitted. Trinitarians not merely "carry with them an impression," but have a firm belief, that "the scriptures ascribe to Jesus the character of Son of God, in a sense in which it is ascribed to no other being." Some of them indeed understand the scriptures as ascribing this character to him in his mediatorial capacity and human nature only, and others to his original existence and his divine nature; but all of them believe in his peculiar sonship, and in his essential divinity; all of them hold that he is at once the Son of God, and himself also God.

'What an absurdity, you will say, is this!—The Son of God—himself God!—How can he be the Son of himself!' Unitarians are perpetually stumbling at this stumbling stone,

and casting it in the way of others. They impose upon themselves and upon others, by a species of sophistry, by which no wise man ought to be deceived. In this trite objection, as is very common with you in other instances, you beg the main question in debate. Only admit the Trinitarian distinction of Persons in the Godhead, and the pretended absurdity vanishes at once. If there are in the Godhead, three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each of these three in inseparable union with the other two is God; then there is no absurdity in saying that Jesus Christ is both the Son of God, and himself God. This does not suppose, or imply, that he is the Son of himself; it only imports that he is the Son of the Father.

Neither does his being Son imply inferiority in nature to the Father. On the contrary, it imports sameness and equality of nature. Was not David of the same nature with Jesse, whose son he was, and of equal attributes and dignity? Is not a true and proper son always of the same nature with his father? Jesus is called *the son of man*, because he partakes of human nature and is truly man. Why then should we not understand, that he is called the SON OF GOD, the ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER, because he also partakes of the divine nature, and is truly God.—It was so understood by the Jews, to whom the appellation, Son of God, as belonging to the Messiah, was familiar. Jesus said to them, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” *Therefore* the Jews sought to kill him, *because he—said that God was his Father*; [original, his own or proper Father] “*making himself EQUAL with God.*” They understood him to call God his Father, not in a sense in which angels and men may call him their Father, but in a peculiarly high sense; in a sense which made God his natural Father, and himself in nature divine and equal with the Father. It was upon this very ground, that they afterwards persisted in charging him with blasphemy, and finally condemned him to death.—Jesus said to Nathanael, “Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the figtree, I saw thee.” Perceiving in this the divine attribute of omniscience, Nathanael replied, “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God;” evidently understanding this appella-

tion to import true divinity. It cannot reasonably be doubted, that such was the understanding of Peter and of Thomas, and the other disciples, when they acknowledged Jesus to be "the CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD," and worshipped him as their "LORD AND THEIR GOD."

The same was the understanding of the primitive Fathers. In his epistle to the Ephesians, St. Ignatius, who had conversed with the apostles, says, "There is one Physician, both fleshly and spiritual; made and not made; God incarnate, true life in death; BOTH OF MARY AND OF GOD; even Jesus Christ our Lord."* This passage shews not only that the blessed martyr acknowledged Jesus Christ to be God, of which his epistles afford most abundant evidence; but also that he understood Christ to be the Son of God in such a sense as to be of the same nature with the Father; that as the Son of Mary, he was made, and was man, as the Son of God, not made, and himself God. "If," says Justin Martyr, in his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, "If ye had considered the things spoken by the prophets, ye would not have denied Christ to be God, *who is the SON of the unbegotten and ineffable God.*" Gregory Nyssen, as quoted by Dr. Waterlund,† speaking of the heretic Eunomius, says, "He says there is one only God Almighty. If he means a *Father* under the name of Almighty, he says the same that we do, and nothing different; but if he intends it of an almighty who is not a *Father*, he may preach circumcision if he pleases, along with his other Jewish tenets. The faith of christians looks to a *Father*. The Father indeed is all; [all things] he is most high, almighty, King of kings, and Lord of lords. Whatever titles sound high and great, they belong to the Father; *and all things that are the Father's belong to the Son.*" The argument is, a Father implies a son of the same nature and attributes.—To the same effect Dionysius of Alexandria says, "The *Father* being eternal the *Son* must be eternal too, Light of Light. The names by me mentioned, [Father and Son] are undivided and inseparable. When I named the Father before I mentioned the Son, I signified the Son in the Father. If any of my false accusers suspect that because I

* Wake's Apostolic Fathers.

† On the Trinity, chap. vi.

called God Creator and Former of all things, I made him Creator of Christ, let him consider that I before styled him Father, and so the Son was included in him."

Such was the doctrine of the primitive church, as might be shewn at large by many quotations. The apostles and the Fathers held Christ to be the Son of God not only "in a peculiarly high sense," but in a sense the highest possible: in a sense which implied his true divinity, his being of the same nature and one with the Father.

IV. A plain scriptural exhibition of the doctrine of the Trinity may serve to shew the fallacy and futility of many of your objections and representations, and the unsoundness and corruptness of your general system.

Dr. Clark, as before stated, held to a Trinity of Divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. "With the first and supreme Cause, or Father of all things," he says, "there has existed from the beginning a *second* DIVINE PERSON, which is his Word or Son."—"With the Father and the Son, there has existed from the beginning a *third* DIVINE PERSON, which is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son."* Thus far he agrees with orthodox Trinitarians, ancient and modern, excepting that he makes the Father, *separately considered*, "the first and supreme Cause of all things;" and thus far, with the specified exception, he proves his doctrine by most abundant and decisive scriptural testimony, establishing, beyond all reasonable debate, the personal distinction, and the co-existence before all ages of the DIVINE THREE.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, then, are either three Divine Persons *united in one Godhead*, or else three *separate Divine Beings*. The former is the orthodox doctrine, the latter is the doctrine of Dr. Clark. But if the three Divine Persons are so many distinct beings, having each a separate existence, then must there not be three Gods?—Dr. Clark indeed held, as you correctly state, that "the Father *alone* is the supreme God;" and this he asserts with astonishing assurance, and in the way of begging the main question which it behoved him to prove. Be it however even so, that the Fa-

* Scripture Doctrine, Part II. Sections 2 and 3.

ther alone is the *supreme* God; then the other Divine Persons are two *inferiour* Deities. This conclusion, so obvious and unavoidable, is neither denied nor directly affirmed in Dr. Clark's book, but is favoured and forced upon the mind by the entire train of his argument. This is the grand absurdity of his most absurd system. If there was ever a Tritheist in christendom, Dr. Clark was one; and if "the liberal christians in this part of our country agree substantially with Dr. Clark," instead of being Unitarians, they are Tritheists.

In opposition to this tritheistical scheme, orthodox christians hold that the three Divine Persons are *united in one Godhead*. This we believe to be the plain scriptural doctrine: for while the scriptures distinctly reveal to us the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and abundantly ascribe to each of the Three, divine names, attributes, works, and honours; yet they assure us throughout, that there is but one God, and utterly preclude the doctrine of inferiour Deities.

Though the unity of the three Divine Persons in one Godhead involves mystery which, probably, no finite mind will ever fully explore; yet the scriptures open to us a vista of this wonderful glory. Jesus in his memorable intercessory prayer with his disciples, says, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; AS THOU FATHER ART IN ME AND I IN THEE, *that they all may be one in us.*" And christians are abundantly exhorted in the scriptures to seek and preserve the most perfect unity.—In what does this unity consist? Undoubtedly in being, as St. Paul expresses it, "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment,"—"being knit together in love." When christians are thus in mind, in judgment, and in love, perfectly joined and knit together, they are in a most important and interesting sense one. They have "one Spirit and one hope;—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is in them all." They have the same views of divine truth,—of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit,—of the gospel, of the way of holiness and life, of the kingdom of grace and of glory; they love and seek the same things; their thoughts, their

feelings, their desires, their pursuits are in harmony.—The more nearly christians think, and speak, and love, and pursue the same things, and the more intimately they are acquainted with each others minds and hearts, the closer and the more blessed is their union. Were they perfectly holy; had they also exactly the same thoughts on every subject, the same views of every object, the same affections and regards towards every being and thing; and had they moreover a perfect knowledge of each others minds and hearts, their union would be most complete. Though a union so complete probably can never exist between finite minds, as they will always have different capacities and degrees of knowledge, and can never be perfectly intimate with all the feelings and thoughts of each other; yet a union of this *kind* does exist in greater or less degree among believers, and will increase as they are more and more sanctified through the truth, and as they advance in the knowledge of God, of Christ, and of one another, until it attain its highest perfection in the heavenly world.—This is the oneness into which Jesus prayed that his people might be brought, and which he *resembled* to that which exists between him and his Father.

The union, however, of Christ's people, whatever resemblance it may bear, falls infinitely short of the unity of the ever-blessed Trinity. "I," says Christ, "I and the Father are one." "Believe me, that I am in the Father and the Father in me." "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father." "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what [but *as*, Campbell's Translation] he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." "The Father loveth the Son." "I love the Father."* These passages express all that is above described, as comprised in the union of Christ's people, and vastly more.—*The Son is in the bosom of the Father*; perfectly intimate with the Father, and with all his mind and heart. *As the Father knows him, even so he knows the Father*. It will not be doubted even by Unitarians, that the Father knows the Son perfectly, as he knows all other beings: knows him intuitively; has an

* John x, 30. x. 15. xiv, 11. v, 19. iii, 35. xiv, 91.

immediate, intimate, complete perception of all that is in him. Even so then the Son knows the Father; has an intuitive perception, an intimate and perfect knowledge of all his Father's infinite mind and will. *The Son can do nothing of himself, but as he seeth the Father do.* Such is his union with the Father, so perfectly one is his will with the Father's will, that he cannot act separately or by himself; he can do nothing but in union with the Father, and as the Father does. *But what things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son [ομοιως] in the same manner.* Such is their co-operation, their unity of will, and of action, that all that is done by the Father is in the same manner, and at the same time, done by the Son. *The Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father, with perfect, infinite love.*

But if the Son knows the Father even as the Father knows him, intuitively and perfectly; then he knows all that the Father knows. If he can do nothing, otherwise than in union with the Father; but does all things which the Father does, and as the Father does them; then his will and his power are the same with the will and the power of the Father. And if the Father and the Son have the same knowledge and wisdom, the same will and power, and are perfect in mutual love; then they must regard all other beings and things with the same views, the same feelings, and the same purposes.—*The Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father.* All the infinite knowledge, and power, and wisdom, and goodness of the Father are in the Son. “In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” “He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person.” Therefore he says, “He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father also.”—Such is the unity of the Father and the Son.

Of the Holy Spirit we read:* “The Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things [τα βαθυ, the depths] of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”—*The Holy Spirit searcheth even the depths of God.* He then must know the Father and the Son, even as they know him. He knows the things of

* 1 Cor. ii, 10, 11.

God, as the spirit of a man knows what is in the man, that is, by intuition, by consciousness. As the spirit of a man is conscious to all that is in him,—knows intuitively his understanding, and will, and affections, his thoughts, volitions, and feelings; so the Holy Spirit is conscious to all that is in God; not only in himself personally considered, but also in the Father and in the Son: intuitively knows all the attributes, thoughts, affections, designs, and acts of the Godhead.—All the knowledge, then, all the wisdom, all the power, all the goodness, which are in the Father and in the Son, are also in the Holy Spirit. Accordingly he is made known to us, as the Spirit of wisdom and of knowledge, of grace and of holiness, of comfort and of fellowship; who reveals the mind and will of God to men,—“convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,—renews whom he will after the image of God, and dwells in all the saints,—acts in concurrence with the Father and the Son in the great economy of redemption, and carries into effect the glorious designs of divine wisdom and mercy. “When he the Spirit of truth is come,” says Christ, “he shall guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak.” He shall not act by himself alone, but only in union with the Father and the Son. “He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” According to the divine economy, all things pertaining to the salvation of mankind, are first the Father’s, then the Son’s, and then the Holy Spirit’s, to be by him dispensed, agreeably to the will of all the Three.

From this plain, scriptural view, it appears that the unity of the three Divine Persons is the highest and most perfect possible: not merely a *moral union*, such as exists between holy men and angels, but an *essential oneness*, such as constitutes one Godhead. If all the knowledge, and wisdom, and power, and goodness of the Father are also in the Son and in the Holy Spirit; then in their nature, in their attributes, in their designs, in their works, in their blessedness, in their glory, they are one. They are also essentially equal, each

to the other: for all that is in the Father, is in the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. What the Father is, the Son is, and the Holy Spirit is; what the Father knows, the Son knows, and the Holy Spirit knows; what the Father wills, the Son wills, and the Holy Spirit wills; what the Father does, the Son does, and the Holy Spirit does; what the Father enjoys, the Son enjoys, and the Holy Spirit enjoys. They exist, and act, and are blessed forevermore, as one God. This accounts in the most satisfactory manner, for the scriptures ascribing, as they do abundantly ascribe to each of the adorable Three, the same divine names, attributes, works, and honours.

In the Holy Trinity, however, though there is an essential equality, yet there is order, and there is subordination. The Father is first, the Son is second, the Holy Spirit is third, in order; and in relation especially to the great work of redemption, as the scriptures most plainly represent, the Son is subordinate to the Father, and the Holy Spirit, both to the Father and the Son. This sufficiently accounts for the pre-eminence which the scriptures assign to the Father, and from which Unitarians, and even Dr. Clark, most unwarrantably conclude that "the Father alone is the supreme God," and that the Son and Holy Spirit are inferior beings; as if there could be no such thing as *first* among *equals*, and as if *subordination* necessarily implied *inequality*; when, to every person of the least reflection or observation, the contrary is manifest. This therefore might suffice for an answer to the hackneyed Unitarian objection, founded on such passages of scripture as seem to import an inferiority of the Son to the Father: an objection which was answered in my second Letter, as it had been before a thousand times answered; but which nevertheless, you bring forward in your Remarks, p. 20, with an air of assurance and shout of triumph, as if it were fresh, and new, and absolutely unanswerable; and as if it were not at all incumbent on you to answer our argument, founded on the passages, in which the Son is represented as being essentially equal and one with the Father. It may be well however just to remark further and anew, that not only is the Son the second in the order of the Trinity, but, for our

redemption, he made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man. And surely it is not wonderful, that, while in his state of humiliation he appeared in fashion as a man, he should utter expressions, importing inequality; for as man he was unequal, infinitely unequal to God.

After Dr. Clark and others, you seem very fond of repeating, that “the Father alone is the supreme God;” and “we dare not, we *dare* not,” you earnestly say, “approach Jesus Christ as the only living, the only true God.”—There was occasion in old time for the serious interrogation, “Will ye accept his Person? Will ye contend for God?” Let me entreat you, Sir, not to imagine, that you do honour to the Father, by refusing to honour the Son. The Father does not exist “alone,” nor is he *alone* the supreme God. Existing in essential, inseparable union with the Son and the Holy Spirit, whom he loves with infinite delight, it is only in union with them, being himself in them and they in him, that he is the supreme God. Neither does the Son exist alone, nor is he separately considered, “the only living, the only true God.” But existing in essential, inseparable union with the Father and the Holy Spirit, he in them and they in him, he is the living and true God,—“THE TRUE GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE.” We therefore dare not, we *dare* not refuse to honour him, even as we honour the Father. The Holy Spirit also, in essential, inseparable union with the Father, and the Son, he in them and they in him, is the living, true, and supreme God; and being so revealed to us, there was no occasion for an express command to worship him, as there was for one to worship *Christ in his mediatorial character*. There are not wanting examples, however, in the scriptures of the Holy Spirit being religiously invoked. And in that very institution, by which we are initiated into the christian community, a solemn act of worship is prescribed, to be done to the Holy Spirit in union with the other Divine Persons. The high command is, “Go, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the NAME of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY SPIRIT. Shall men then dare to “put asunder what are joined together” in the very *name and nature of God!*

“Christianity,” says the Bishop of Durham,* whom you very justly style the “profound Butler,” “Christianity is not only an external institution of natural religion, and a new promulgation of God’s general providence, as righteous governor and judge of the world; *but it contains also a revelation of a particular dispensation of providence, carrying on by his Son and Spirit, for the recovery and salvation of mankind, who are represented in Scripture to be in a state of RUIN.* And in consequence of this revelation being made, we are commanded to be baptized, not only in the name of the FATHER, but also of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST; and other obligations of duty, unknown before, to the Son and the Holy Ghost, are revealed.—The essence of natural religion may be said to consist in religious regards to God the Father Almighty; and the essence of revealed religion, as distinguished from natural, to consist in religious regards to the Son and the Holy Ghost. And the obligation we are under, of paying these religious regards to each of these Divine Persons respectively, arises from the respective relations which they each stand in to us. How these relations are made known, whether by reason or revelation, makes no alteration in the case; *because the duties arise out of the relations themselves, not out of the manner in which we are informed of them.* The Son and Spirit have each his proper office, in that great dispensation of Providence, the redemption of the world; the one our Mediator, the other our Sanctifier. *Does not then the duty of religious regards to both these Divine Persons as immediately arise, to the view of reason, out of the very nature of these offices and relations,* as the inward good will and kind intention, which we owe to our fellow creatures arises out of the common relation between us and them. If therefore Christ be indeed the Mediator between God and man, i. e. if Christianity be true; *if he be indeed our Lord, our Saviour, and our God,—no one can say what may follow, not only the obstinate, but the careless disregard to him in those high relations.*†

* Analogy, Part II. Chapter I. Sec. 2.

† “It is the ever blessed Trinity we invoke,” says Dr. Sherlock, “when we pray, *Our Father, which art in heaven.* For as they are inseparably One God,

This, Sir, I deem a very sufficient answer to what you have so boldly and unwarrantably objected to the worship of the Son and the Holy Spirit, both in the body of your Remarks, page 20, and in your Note, page 44, where you take it upon you to speak to us, as you are not a little accustomed to do, in the style and the tone of "a master of Israel" as follows: "We find not *one* passage in the scriptures commanding us to worship the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; not *one* precedent which authorizes such worship, and while we feel ourselves bound to exercise christian candour towards those who have adopted this form of worship," (i. e. the great body of orthodox christians in all ages!) "we are not without solemn apprehension, that, in this respect, they are guilty of irreverence towards the word of God, and of preferring to it the commandments and inventions of men."—We ought doubtless to listen attentively to the voice of serious admonition, from whatever quarter it may come; but I can assure you, Sir, I am by no means convinced that the many thousands of holy men in the orthodox church of Christ, who, from the days of the apostles to the present, have worshipped the Father,

so they are the inseparable Object of our worship; since this great mystery of a Trinity in Unity is so plainly revealed to us, we cannot worship this one Supreme God, but we must direct our worship to all the three Divine Persons in the unity of the same Godhead; for we do not worship this one Supreme God, unless we worship Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: and therefore whether we invoke each Person distinctly, or pray only to God, by the name of the most High God, or by the name of Father, or the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ it is all one; for Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is the One Supreme God, and the entire Object of our worship: and whoever worships one God, but not Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, does not worship the true God, not the God of the Christians. Before this was so plainly revealed, it was sufficient to worship One Supreme God, without any conception of the distinct Persons in the Godhead; but when it is plainly revealed to us, that this One Supreme God is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, whoever does not worship Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, does not worship the true God; for the true God is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and there is no God besides him; which I would desire our *Unitarians* (as they falsely call themselves) and our *Deists* carefully to consider. If any thing be fundamental in religion, it is the worship of the One true God, and if Father, Son, and Holy Ghost be this One true God, those who worship a God, who is not Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, do not worship the true God, and that I think is the true notion of idolatry. So that these men are so far from being christians, that I cannot see how they are worshippers of the true God: which should at least make them concerned to examine this matter with more care and less prejudice than they have yet done."—Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity. Sec. VI.

Son, and Holy Spirit, have been "valiant for the truth upon the earth," and "shone as lights in the world" have had less reverence for the word of God, than those, who, from age to age, have either "gone out from them because they were not of them," or else have laboured more "privily," to introduce new doctrines, subversive of their holy faith and worship.

You say, p. 18, "We do indeed object to the Trinity that as it is often stated, it is an unintelligible proposition; and we say, that it is out of our power to believe a proposition of which we do not *know the meaning*." In p. 23, you represent the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, and the union of the Divine and human natures in the person of Christ, as mere "phrases which cannot be defined, which convey to common minds no more meaning than words of an unknown tongue, and present to the learned only flitting shadows of thought, instead of clear and steady conceptions." And expressions to the same effect are scattered unsparingly in all your pamphlets, and in most Unitarian writings. The design is obvious.

But, Sir, do you believe no proposition of which you do not *know the meaning*? Take the proposition which you and other Unitarians would make the *single* essential article of the christian creed: *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God*. Do you understand the meaning of this proposition? It is plain from what has before been exhibited, that you do not. You do not know who or what *Christ* is: whether a created, or an uncreated being; whether a creature whose existence had a beginning, or a demigod, or a "*somewhat*," who existed from eternity. As little do you know the meaning of the appellation, *the Son of God*. You "carry with you indeed an impression, that Jesus is the Son of God in a peculiarly high sense," but in what sense you do not understand. According to your own statement then, you do not believe the proposition, that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God!" Do not believe what you hold to be the single essential article of the christian faith!—Take another very simple proposition, which, though you will not allow it to be essential, holds nevertheless a distinguished place in the

christian scriptures: *Christ died for our sins*. Of this proposition you understand neither the *subject* nor the *predicate*. Concerning *Christ*, the subject, as already shewn, you are in infinite doubt; nor do you any better understand the meaning of the predicate, *died for our sins*. That some sort of being called Christ, in some sense died for our sins, you seem to suppose; but what sort of being he is, or in what sense he died for our sins, you do not know. This proposition, then, according to your declaration, you do not believe. Both these scriptural propositions, *Jesus is the Christ*, and *Christ died for our sins*, are "phrases which" to your mind "convey no more meaning than words of an unknown tongue, and present only flitting shadows of thought instead of clear and steady conceptions." It is so also, it should seem, in regard to many, if not most other, important scriptural propositions.

I shall not however concede, that the case is the same with us in regard to the Trinity. I do believe that we understand the meaning of the proposition, *the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three Divine Persons in one God*. To remove a stumbling-block out of the way of Unitarians, we have indeed said, that we use the term, *person*, because we have no better word; and that we are not tenacious of the name, provided we have the thing. But this accommodating concession you attempt to ridicule. The term, *person*, indeed, when applied to created beings, denotes an intelligent agent, who has a *separate* existence. In this particular respect, we do not consider the term as applicable to the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. For myself, however, I have not the least difficulty in applying the term to each of the Divine Three. I do believe that though they have not each a *separate* existence, but are all essentially united in one God; yet they are really and truly intelligent agents, each possessing all divine attributes, and performing in union with the other two, all divine works. And so far as I can perceive, I have as clear an understanding of the meaning of *person*, when applied to the three Divine agents united in one God, as when applied to angels or men, who have each a separate existence. I do not see, nor do I believe that you or any

other man can shew, why three Divine Persons may not so exist as to be one God, as well as three human persons so as to be three men; nor why the one God may not exist in three Persons as well as in one.

By no means do I admit, that we do not know the meaning of the proposition, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three Divine Persons in one God. It is a proposition affirming a plain matter of fact; and the matter of fact we understand and believe. The scriptures reveal to us the adorable Three, distinctly, and by name; to each of the Three they ascribe divine names, attributes, works, and honours; and yet they assure us that Jehovah our God [*Aleim, Gods*] is one Jehovah. From the scriptures then we learn, and understand, that there is a Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit: that the Father possesses divine attributes, and is therefore God; that the Son possesses divine attributes, and is therefore God; that the Holy Spirit also possesses divine attributes, and is therefore God; and that the divine Three so exist together as to be one God. Now what is there in all this which, as matter of fact, we do not understand?—If you say we cannot understand how three divine Persons can so exist as to be one God, that is quite another thing; a thing not contained in the proposition; and therefore not necessary to be understood, in order to the doctrine being understood, and believed. The proposition does not pretend to declare the nature or manner of the union; but merely affirms the fact. And this we understand, as well as you understand the simple proposition, *there is a God*, *How* there can be a God, or *how* he exists, you do not understand. You may have much to say about self-existence, necessary being, infinity, and eternity, but you comprehend none of these things,—So of other facts.—*God is omnipresent*; but *how* he is in every place, you do not understand. *God is omniscient*; but *how* he knows all things, you do not understand. *God made the worlds out of nothing*; but *how* he made them you do not understand. Your soul and body are united in one man; but *how* they are united you do not know. You think; but *how* you cannot tell. You walk; but *how* your will moves your body, you cannot explain. The sun warms the earth; but

how? Vegetables grow out of the ground; *how?* Animals are nourished by food; *how?*—There is no end to this sort of statement and inquiry; for you do not know *how* any thing exists, or moves, or acts. You understand and you believe the plain matters of fact; but *how* things can be so, is utterly beyond your power to comprehend.

I do not deny, but have freely admitted that there is mystery in the Trinity. The mystery, however, does not lie in the matter of fact, as stated in the proposition, that three Divine Persons are one God, or that the one God exists in three Divine Persons; for this is revealed with sufficient clearness. The mystery lies in something beyond; something not contained in the proposition; something not revealed, but about which there may be endless speculation without any satisfactory results. It is so with respect to every thing else. The being of God, in the simplest statement of the truth, involves mystery upon mystery in unlimited accumulation. Yet a plain unsophisticated man finds no difficulty in understanding, or in believing the proposition, there is a God. No more does he find any difficulty, in understanding, or in believing the proposition, that God exists in three persons.

You may very well, therefore, spare yourself the concern which you would seem to feel for common christians. The plain humble christian, who reads his Bible much more, and to much better purpose, than the wise men of the world by whom he is despised, finds that in that sacred book all divine attributes, works, and honours are ascribed to the Father, who gave the Son to die for him; that the same divine attributes, works, and honours are ascribed to the Son, his adored Redeemer and Saviour; and the same to the Holy Spirit, his gracious Sanctifier and Comforter. He therefore understands that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three Divine Persons in one God: and accordingly he believes, loves, and adores; undisturbed by the metaphysical and dialectical speculations, and the critical and sophistical subtilties of men, who, not content with the truth as divinely revealed, bewilder themselves, and labour to involve others, in endless perplexities and mazes:—just as plain men understand, believe, and act upon, other truths and facts, clearly

presented to their minds; while speculatists and philosophers, unable to account *how* things can be so, employ themselves in raising endless difficulties and objections; until one denies the existence of matter, another, the existence of created spirits, a third, the existence of a God, and thus between them all contrive to annihilate the universe. It is as true now as ever it was, and as much a reason of holy thankfulness, that the "things which are hidden from the wise and prudent are revealed unto babes." "The meek he will guide in judgment; the meek he will teach his ways."

The objection of mystery, which you and other Unitarians are perpetually urging against the Trinity, might be urged, and has been urged, with equal reason, and with equal force, against all the principal doctrines of religion, both natural and revealed. If we are to fly before this objection, we must fly not only from orthodoxy to unitarianism, but from unitarianism to Deism, from Deism to atheism, and from atheism to universal skepticism. If the pretensions of the "rational christian" to superiour wisdom, because, to avoid mystery, he denies the Trinity, are well founded; then for the same reason, the deist is wiser than the rational christian, the atheist is wiser than the deist, and the universal skeptick is the wisest man of all. And upon this scale, I suppose, the pretensions to wisdom are actually graduated.

"That this is a very mysterious doctrine," says Bishop Porteus, "we do not deny; but it is not more so than many other doctrines of the christian revelation, which we all admit, and which we cannot reject without subverting the foundation, and destroying the very substance and essence of our religion. The miraculous birth and incarnation of our blessed Lord, his union of the human nature with the divine, his redemption of mankind, and his expiation of their sins by his death on the cross;—these are doctrines plainly taught in scripture, and yet as incomprehensible to our finite understandings, as the doctrine of three Persons and one God. But what we contend for in all these instances is, that these mysteries, although confessedly *above* our reason, are not *contrary* to it. This is a plain and well known distinction, and in the present case an incontrovertible one. No one for

instance can say, that the supposition of three Persons in one God is contrary to reason. We cannot, indeed, *comprehend* such a distinction in the divine nature; but unless we know *perfectly* what that nature is, it is impossible for us to say that such a distinction may not subsist in it consistent with its unity.—Let not then the mysteries of the gospel ever be a rock of offence to you, or in any degree shake the constancy of your faith. They are inseparable from any religion, that is suited to the nature, to the wants, and to the *fallen state* of such a creature as man.—Laying aside all the superfluity of learning, and all the pride of human wisdom, let us hold fast to the profession of our faith, without wavering and without cavilling at what we cannot comprehend.—Let us resolutely beat down every bold imagination, every high thing that exalteth itself against the mysterious truths of the gospel; bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, and receiving with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls.”*

No, Sir, it is not for “flitting shadows of thought,” that we contend; it is for most substantial realities. It is for three Divine Persons, of illimitable perfection and glory,

* On Matt. Lec. xxiv. Does not, Sir, the Bishop of London in this passage, show as much of the meekness of wisdom, and of the spirit of the gospel, as your fraternity of Unitarians, who, you say, p. 19, “always declare that Scripture with one voice disowns the doctrine of the Trinity, and that of all the fictions of theologians, the doctrine of three persons in one God has perhaps the least countenance from the Bible!”

In this connexion you have seen fit to entertain the publick with a brief history of your own mind in relation to the Trinity; in which we are presented with an instance, similar to too many others, of a struggling and gradual decline from the principles of an orthodox education: principles to whose influence Dr. Priestly very frankly ascribes the habits of seriousness and devotion which remained with him, even after he had adopted sentiments confessedly less conducive to such habits. Did I think it proper thus to obtrude personal history, I could give you a very different account. I could tell you of one, who well remembers the day of enchanting temptation,—when his feet stood on slippery places,—when he felt himself strongly impelled to follow the *ignes fatui* of unitarian illusion; and who devoutly hopes never to forget the gracious hand which arrested his course, guided him back, and as he humbly trusts, fixed his feet on “*a stone, a tried stone, a sure foundation.*” But rather would I take leave to recommend to your very serious perusal a little book entitled *The Force of Truth.*

who have manifested towards us exceeding riches of grace and mercy, and to whom we owe supreme and everlasting love, and gratitude, and homage. Though we cannot by searching find them out unto perfection; yet we can thankfully receive the testimony which they have condescended to give us respecting themselves and one another, and humbly adore the ineffable and incomprehensible glory which they have opened to our view. In the most Holy Three in One, we see what can never be seen in a single Divine Person:—we see a *society*, infinitely perfect and blessed.—When we turn our thoughts from the Trinity to one Divine Person, inhabiting eternity in solitary existence, we find it impossible to conceive how he can be happy. We can form no conception of happiness without love, nor of perfect happiness where love has not an adequate object. But the most exalted creatures are infinitely below the Deity; the whole created universe is as nothing in comparison with him. If then he existed in one solitary person, where could he find an adequate object of infinite love, and how could he be infinitely happy?—When we contemplate the Trinity, a far different view is presented to our minds. GOD IS LOVE. The three adorable Persons, unlimited in all perfections and excellencies, inhabit eternity together; dwell everlastingly in each other, in mutual, perfect, unmeasurable love. Thus infinitely happy themselves, they unitedly delight in communicating happiness to their creatures. Their own society of boundless love and boundless happiness, is the archetype and centre of that holy, and blessed, and numberless fellowship of angels and of the redeemed from among men, who are to be “gathered together in one,” around the throne of everlasting glory, with immortal joys, and unceasing praises.—Call this, Sir, mystery, mysticism, or what you please;—it is a theme on which my mind delights to dwell; and which I cannot exchange for the solitary Deity, and the philosophical heaven of Unitarians.

V. In pp. 13, 14, and 19, of your Remarks, I find the following passages. “With respect to the ATONEMENT, the great body of liberal christians seem to me to accord precisely

with the author of "Bible News," or rather both agree very much with the profound Butler. Both agree that Jesus Christ, by his sufferings and intercession, obtains forgiveness for sinful men, or that on account, or in consequence of what Christ has done and suffered, the punishment of sin is averted from the penitent, and blessings forfeited by sin are bestowed. On the question, which is often asked, how the death of Christ has this blessed influence, they generally think that the scriptures have given us little light, and that it is the part of wisdom to accept the kind appointment of God, without constructing theories for which the materials must be chiefly borrowed from our own imagination."—"It is indeed very true that Unitarians say nothing about *infinite* atonement, and they shudder when they hear, what Dr. Worcester seems to assert, that the ever blessed God suffered and died on the cross. They reject these representations, because they find not *one* passage in scripture which directly asserts them or gives them support. Not *one* word do we hear from Christ or his apostles of an *infinite* atonement. In not *one* solitary text is the efficacy of Christ's death in obtaining forgiveness, ascribed to his being the Supreme God. All this is theology of man's making, and strongly marked with the hand of its author."—Upon these passages I have to remark:

1. If there is presented to the mind of man a subject which, more than any other, should repress the spirit of haughty disdain and fastidious cavil, it is that of the atonement. If ever man should feel and show profound humility, tenderness, and reverence, it is when he approaches the cross of Him, who, though he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet humbled himself, and became obedient unto death.—However much of a spirit opposite to the meekness and lowliness of Christ might be deemed suitable, to give effect to personal invective and popular harangue; but little of it surely was necessary, in making a mere statement of your sentiments on the most affecting and awful of all subjects.

2. You are not, I presume, entirely unacquainted with the history or the writings of the primitive age of the christian

church. If not, you doubtless know that, in that age, both Pagans and Jews reproached the christians with worshipping a *crucified God*; and that the christians did not shrink from the reproach, nor think it incumbent on them to make the offence of the cross to cease. "Permit me," said St. Ignatius, when on his way to the scene of his martyrdom, "Permit me to imitate the passion, (the sufferings,) of *my God*."—"Consider the times; and expect *HIM who is above all time, eternal, invisible, though for our sakes made visible; impalpable, and impassible, yet for us subjected to sufferings; enduring all manner of ways for our salvation*."—At this you "shudder." Yet I suppose the blessed martyr, who had been conversant with the apostles, and by them ordained a bishop, had some right understanding of the doctrine of Christ crucified. You "shudder" too at the words of Paul, in their plain and genuine sense. "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross." For in these very words, I summed up my statement, to which you refer when you speak of your shuddering; and more than what is expressed in them I have nowhere expressed on this topick. And yet I must believe that Paul as well understood the doctrine of Christ crucified, as any Unitarian of this enlightened age. This same apostle, in his pathetick address to the elders of Ephesus, according to our common reading, said, "Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood."* The apostle John also, according to our common reading, says, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us."† If by various readings you might be justified in doubting the genuineness of the common reading in these passages; yet I must be allowed to deny that you are warranted in the bold assurance, with which you assert that the scriptures give no "support to these representa-

* Acts xx, 28.

† 1 John iii, 16.

tions." On the contrary, I contend that the scriptures do represent and affirm, that the same Jesus Christ, who is God as well as man, suffered and died on the cross.

The phrase "the ever blessed God suffered and died on the cross," is not mine. I said that we "hold Jesus Christ to be God and man united in one person, and that this *one complex person suffered and died*." Do you perceive no difference, Sir, between these two statements? If not, I beg you to consider the subject until you understand it, before you again undertake to state what I "seem to assert." There is the same sort of fallacy in this representation of yours, as in that which makes us say, that "Jesus Christ is the only living, the only true God."* We do not say nor hold, that Jesus Christ is the only living and true God, *separate* from the Father and the Holy Spirit. So neither do we say, that the ever blessed God, separately from man, suffered and died; but we do say that Jesus Christ, *as God and man in one person*, did suffer and die. This we believe the scriptures most fully teach, and at this we verily think no christian ought to shudder. We know however that this fundamental doctrine, this corner stone, has always been to some a stumbling block, and to others foolishness.

You seem to have a very particular antipathy to "an *infinite* atonement." This phrase again is not mine; nor do I know why you should introduce it in the manner

* Of the same sort of fallacy you avail yourself habitually. A very striking instance of it occurs in your note, p. 46, where you take upon you to say, that "Unitarianism, besides being directly affirmed in particular passages, runs through the whole scriptures, appears on the whole current of sentiment and language in the Old and the New Testament." This imposing assertion could have been made only under cover of an ambiguity. You would not venture to assert, in unequivocal terms, that in a single "passage" of scripture it is "directly affirmed" that there is but *one person in the Godhead*, nor that this doctrine "runs through the whole scriptures," &c. But the scriptures do teach, directly in particular passages, and implicitly throughout, that there is but *one God*; and to this doctrine you here apply the ambiguous term *Unitarianism*, as if Trinitarians held to more Gods than one. This, Sir, is practising, as an honest man should be very cautious of doing. In opposition to another assertion of yours in this same connexion, I should feel perfectly safe in affirming, that the doctrine of the Trinity, instead of depending for support "on a small number of disconnected texts," "runs through the whole scriptures," and pervades the entire system of revealed truth.

you have done, unless it were to make an erroneous impression, as if the question between us were, whether the atonement was *infinite*. The question, however, is, whether the death of Christ was truly and properly an *atonement*,—an *expiatory sacrifice for sin*. Let this question first be determined, and then if you please attend to the other. Your practice of perpetually confounding things, and varying and misstating the points in debate, whatever other purpose it may serve, certainly can serve no good purpose.

In reply to your peremptory assertion, that “in not one solitary text is the efficacy of Christ’s atonement ascribed to his being the supreme God,” I affirm that the scriptures certainly do, not in one solitary text only, but in many passages, and with one voice, ascribe the efficacy of Christ’s atonement, to *his divine dignity*. Not to cite particular passages, it may suffice to refer to the epistle to the Hebrews entire; in which the apostle sets out with asserting and proving *the divine dignity of the Son*; and then upon this firm basis, founds the doctrine of his high priesthood, and his propitiatory sacrifice. In the course of his argument he uses such expressions as these: “Such an High Priest became us.”* “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, *but by his own blood*, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; *how much more shall the blood of Jesus Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*”† In vain, Sir, do you attempt, by bold and random assertions, to escape from the solemn inference, so odious to many, that we are sinners,

* Heb. vii, 26.

† Heb. ix, 12, 13, 14. “When the Son of God, who is one with the Father, takes flesh and blood upon him, and becomes God manifest in the flesh, here God and man are united in one complex person, and hereby we enjoy an all-sufficient Saviour, a Reconciler beyond all exception, a sacrifice of atonement, equal to the guilt of our transgressions. And so far as I can judge, it is on this account one apostle says, “God redeemed the church with his own blood;” and another asserts,

naturally in a ruined, condemned state; and that in order to our salvation, there was need of such a propitiation for our sins, as the scriptures set forth in Jesus Christ crucified.

3. "With respect to Christ's atonement, you say, the great body of liberal christians seem to me to accord precisely with the author of "Bible News," or rather both agree very much with the profound Butler." Most devoutly, Sir, do I wish that we had more evidence of this, than that it "*seems*," so to you. Most gratefully should I rejoice to know, that you, and others of your liberal brethren, really agree, on this momentous point, with Bishop Butler. But why refer to this distinguished writer? Did you mean to make the impression that your orthodox opponents here materially differ from him? The truth is, that my statement of the doctrine of atonement, is so exactly in agreement with his, that my readers might be ready to suppose, that when making it, I had his book open before me. I wish you had seen fit to quote him at large, and recommend his sentiments to your readers. As you have not done it, I will take leave to make a quotation.

After a very lucid and forcible argument to shew the reasonableness and credibility of the doctrine, Bishop Butler proceeds to say,* "The particular manner in which Christ interposed in the redemption of the world, or his office as *mediator* in the largest sense *between God and man*, is thus represented to us in the scripture. '*He is the light of the world;*' the revealer of the will of God in the most eminent sense.

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, that he laid down his life for us." And I do not yet see sufficient reason why that expression of St. Paul may not be referred to in the same sense, "How much more shall the blood of Jesus Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience," &c. If the eternal Spirit signify the divine nature or Godhead, which dwelt bodily in the man Jesus, then the dignity of his complete person is made the foundation of the value of his blood. This dignity of the Godhead which was personally united to the man who suffered, spreads an infinite value over his sufferings and merit: and this renders them equal to that infinite guilt and demerit of sin, which would have extended the punishment of man to everlasting ages. The infinite dignity of the person suffering answers to the infinite dignity of the person offended, and so takes away the necessity of the everlasting duration of it." Watts's Sermons on Atonement.

* Analogy, Part II. Chap. V. Sec. 6.

HE IS A PROPITIATORY SACRIFICE;* *the Lamb of God;*† and as he voluntarily offered himself up, he is styled our high priest.‡ And, which seems of peculiar weight, he is described before hand in the Old Testament, under the same character of a priest, and AN EXPIATORY VICTIM.§ And whereas it is objected, that all this is merely by way of allusion to the sacrifices of the Mosaick law, the apostle on the contrary affirms, that *the law was a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things;*¶ and that *the priests that offer gifts according to the law—serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God, when he was about to make the tabernacle. For see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount;*** i. e. the Levitical priesthood was a shadow of the priesthood of Christ, in like manner as the tabernacle made by Moses, was according to that shewed him in the mount. The priesthood of Christ and the tabernacle in the mount, were the originals; of the former of which the Levitical priesthood was a type, and of the latter the tabernacle made by Moses was a copy. The doctrine of this epistle then plainly is, that *the legal sacrifices were allusions to the great and final atonement; to be made by the BLOOD OF CHRIST;* and not that this was an allusion to those. Nor can any thing be more express or determinate than the following passage. *It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin. Wherefore, when he cometh into the world he saith, sacrifice and offering, i. e. of bulls, and of goats, thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me.—Lo I come to do thy will, O God.—By which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*†† And to add one passage more of the like kind. *“Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, i. e. without*

* Rom. iii, 25, and v, 11. 1 Cor. v, 7. Eph. v, 2. 1 John ii, 2.

† John i, 29, 36, and throughout the book of Revelation.

‡ Throughout the epistle to the Hebrews.

§ Isa. liii. Dan. ix, 24. Ps. cx, 4.

** Heb. viii, 4, 5.

¶ Heb. x, 1.

†† Heb. x, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10.

BEARING SIN AS HE DID AT HIS FIRST COMING, BY BEING AN OFFERING FOR IT, without having our *iniquities* again *laid upon him*, without being any more A SIN OFFERING; *unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.** Nor do the inspired writers at all confine themselves to this manner of speaking concerning the SATISFACTION of Christ, but declare an efficacy in what he did and suffered, additional to, and beyond, mere instruction, example and government, in great variety of expression.”—The Bishop in this connexion proceeds to quote nearly thirty texts, many of which are the very same which are quoted in my Second Letter, to shew that we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins through the death of Christ, AS AN EXPIATORY SACRIFICE.

I repeat it, Sir,—most gratefully should I rejoice to know, that you and your liberal brethren agree with Dr. Butler in these orthodox views of the atonement. But,

4. It is to be lamented, that you have thought it necessary to take especial care, not to leave the matter in a general, unqualified reference to Butler; but proceed to qualify, until you fritter the doctrine to atoms, and scatter it in the wind. “Both agree, you say, that Jesus Christ, by his sufferings and intercession, obtains forgiveness for sinful men, *OR that on account, OR IN CONSEQUENCE of what Christ has done and suffered, the punishment of sin is averted from the penitent, and blessings, forfeited by sin, are bestowed.*” Such are the ambiguous words which you delight to use. Undoubtedly, Sir, when penning this studied sentence, you were perfectly aware, that Unitarians of the lowest class, even such as make Jesus Christ a mere fallible and peccable man, and utterly discard, and irreverently ridicule the doctrine of atonement, would make no difficulty of giving to this representation their general assent. They would readily admit, that, “*in consequence of what Christ has done and suffered, the punishment of sin is averted from the penitent, and blessings, forfeited by sin, are bestowed;*” as, with equal readiness, and in the same sense, they would admit, that the same benefits are conferred, *in consequence of what Paul and other*

* Heb. xxviii.

good men have done and suffered.—But is this, Sir, “agreeing very much with the profound Butler!”* I deeply regret to say, that I can see in this statement very little evidence of a true belief in the atonement. At any rate, whether you believe in the atonement in any proper sense, or not, it is lamentably manifest, not from this passage only, but from uniform representations throughout your three pamphlets, that you consider the atonement as comparatively unimportant, and hold that men who utterly reject it, may nevertheless be very good christians.

There is a wide difference between acknowledging Jesus Christ, merely as a prophet and a preacher of righteousness, who laboured, interceded, and died, to impart, to confirm, and to impress divine instruction, that men might be induced to *repent* and trust in a merciful God for pardon and eternal

* It is agreeing, I acknowledge, very much with the popular Price, whom possibly you had in your eye as your model, and who in a Sermon, lately republished with the high *imprimatur* of the liberal party, says, “Give me but the fact, that Christ is the *resurrection*, and the *life*, and EXPLAIN IT AS YOU WILL. Give me but this single truth, that *eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour*, and I shall be perfectly easy with respect to the contrary opinions which are entertained about the dignity of Christ; about his nature, person, and offices; and the manner in which he saves us. Call him, if you please, simply a *man*, endowed with extraordinary powers; or call him a *superangelick* being, who appeared in human nature for the purpose of accomplishing our salvation; or say, (if you can admit a thought so shockingly absurd!) that it was the second of three co-equal persons in the Godhead, forming one person with a human soul, that came down from heaven and suffered and died on the cross: Say, that he saves us merely by being a messenger from God to reveal to us eternal life, and to confer it upon us; or say on the contrary, that he not only *reveals* to us eternal life, and confers it upon us, but has *obtained* it for us by offering himself a propitiatory sacrifice on the cross, and making satisfaction to the justice of the Deity for our sins: I shall think such differences of little moment, provided the fact is allowed, that Christ did rise from the dead, and will raise us from the dead; and that all righteous penitents will, through God’s grace in him, be accepted and made happy for ever.”—So then it is “of very little moment,” whether we worship Christ as God, or regard him only as a mere man;—whether we recognise his death as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, or only as one instance among many of mere martyrdom;—whether with bleeding hearts we come to his cross, humbly relying on the merits of his death for pardon and life, or trust in ourselves that we are “righteous penitents!” By no dread of reproach can I be deterred from declaring, that neither the name nor the popularity of Dr. Price, nor of any other man or society of men, ought to protect sentiments like these from the decided reprobation of every person who bows at the name of Jesus, or hopes for salvation through faith in his blood.

life; and believing on him, not only as a prophet and a preacher, but also as our great High Priest, by whose blood we have redemption; even the forgiveness of sins, and our Surety, who is the end of the law for righteousness unto every one that believeth on him. This is a main, a radical point between the orthodox and Unitarians. You acknowledge Jesus as a prophet and a preacher of righteousness, and make such an acknowledgement of him essential to the christian name; but his priesthood and suretyship, with his propitiatory sacrifice, and vicarious righteousness, you either deny, or hold to be non-essential and of little importance. A mere man, for aught that appears, might have been authorized and inspired to do all which Jesus did in the way of revealing, preaching, and attesting the mind and will of God, for the instruction of mankind; indeed Paul did *more* in this way than Jesus in person did; and so long as you hold this to be all which was essential to our salvation, it is not strange that you do not see it necessary that the Saviour should be God as well as man.

But, Sir, do not the scriptures dwell infinitely more on Christ's office as priest, than on his office as prophet? Was it not to him, chiefly as the great High Priest, who by the one offering of himself was to obtain eternal redemption for us, that the Mosaick economy entire, and all the instituted sacrifices, from the beginning of the world to his incarnation, looked as their antitype? Did not his harbinger John publicly announce him as *THE LAMB of God that taketh away the sin of the world*? Was not salvation by his death, as a propitiation for sin, the burden of apostolick preaching? Was it not the express design of the Epistle to the Hebrews at large, to establish his priesthood, and the necessity and efficacy of his sacrifice? And do not the scriptures most abundantly represent, that the faith which it requires of us, is not merely an assent to his divine instructions, but also and especially a fiducial trust in his atoning blood?

By what authority then can any one either deny the atonement, or represent it as doubtful, or of little importance. When the scriptures so constantly insist on the propitiatory sacrifice of our great High Priest, and so directly found upon it

the doctrine of justification unto life, and all the immortal hopes of man; who can be authorized to set this foundation aside, or represent it as not essential to the christian faith? When, from the day the Saviour was promised, it was only by sacrifice, typical of the great and final atonement to be made by him, that fallen men were allowed to draw near to God, *and without shedding of blood there was no remission*; are we now, since the Saviour has come, and the atonement has been made,—are we now to be taught that the fact of the sacrifice is doubtful, that the truth of it is unimportant, that faith in it is unnecessary, and that, if we please, we may utterly reject it, and boldly, and without guilt or danger, approach the holy God, trusting in ourselves as “righteous penitents!”

If it is not necessary to believe in Christ’s priestly office and work, why is it necessary to believe in him as a prophet and messenger of God? If we may innocently and safely deny his death to be *propitiatory*, why may we not, with equal innocence and safety, deny his instructions to be *divine*? Many who have denied revelation altogether, have nevertheless acknowledged the pre-eminent excellence of the character, and of the instructions of Jesus; and have been men of distinguished talents, and of exemplary morality. Why is not this sufficient? If they acknowledge the morality of the gospel to be excellent, and hold the necessity of repentance of all sin, and of a life conformed to the principles of righteousness and virtue; why is it necessary for them to believe that Jesus and the apostles were divinely commissioned and inspired?—Is not the difference between deists of this description and unitarians vastly less, than between unitarians and orthodox christians? Such deists agree with unitarians in acknowledging Jesus as the most excellent of all teachers; both profess to reverence his instructions; both hold the necessity of repentance and a good life; both believe that “righteous penitents” will be saved from “the punishment of sin,” and receive from a God of infinite goodness and mercy the reward of everlasting life; and both agree in rejecting the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, and in refusing to trust for pardon and salvation in the vicarious merits of his death.—They are

near to each other,—next door neighbours.—But between them both and orthodox christians the distance is great.

If in any case, a *surety*, or a *substitute* is proposed on one part, and not accepted or consented to on the other, the proposal in that case fails, and the debtor, or the offender is still answerable solely in his own person. God proposes Christ crucified to us as our surety, our substitute, our propitiation: it is by faith in him, as thus set forth, that we consent to the proposal. If we acknowledge Christ as our surety, our substitute, the propitiation for our sins, and believe on him as such, we consent to God's gracious proposal, and there is a settled, a fixed agreement or covenant between him and us; an agreement or covenant respecting the cancelling of our sins, our renewal after the image of God, and the entire concern of our eternal salvation. If we do not thus acknowledge and believe on Christ, but deny and reject his propitiatory sacrifice; the momentous proposal fails as to us: we are without a surety, without a ransom for our souls, without the benefit of a propitiation; and must stand at the bar of the righteous Judge solely upon our own personal footing!—“If I forsake the gospel of Christ and his atonement for sin, whither shall my guilty conscience fly to find a better relief.—Nature shews me no way to recompense the justice of God for my innumerable sins. Nature shews me nothing which God will accept in the room of my own *perfect* obedience, or in the room of my everlasting punishment. If I leave thee, O Jesus, whither shall I go? Thy sufferings are the spring of my hope of pardon, and my eternal life depends on thy painful and shameful death.—O may I ever maintain a constant exercise of faith on the Son of God as my great High Priest! May I keep up a lively and delightful sense of the *all-sufficiency of his atonement* upon my spirit, that this, *which is the glory of my religion*, may also be the daily life of my soul.—Let me call to mind the solemn seasons of transaction between Christ and my soul. Have I not resigned myself to him as an all-sufficient Saviour, to deliver me both from the guilt and the power of every sin? *Have I not trusted in the blood of his atonement, and felt the quickening power of his Spirit as the fruit of his blood?* Has he not raised me to a new life?—I

would rise to join with the blessed acclamations, the holy songs of the saints on high, while they behold their exalted Saviour. How sweet their songs! How loud their acclamations! This is the man, **THE GOD-MAN WHO DIED FOR ME!** This is the glorious Person; **THE LAMB OF GOD, WHO WASHED ME FROM MY SINS IN HIS OWN BLOOD!**"*—Such, Sir, are the sentiments, inspired by faith in the atoning blood of Christ. Where do we find sentiments like these uttered by a Unitarian. We hear much of their "talents" and their "learning," their "purity" and their "virtues;" but little—but nothing—*of their glorying only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*—A true believer in Christ's atonement never will; never can consider it; or represent it as doubtful or unimportant; never will or can admit any other foundation of hope for fallen mankind:

VI. After stating what "*seem*" to you to be the prevalent sentiments of the liberal party, you are pleased to say, p. 14, "My motive for making the preceding statement, is no other than a desire to contribute whatever may be in my power to the peace of our churches. I have hoped that by this representation, some portion of the charity which has been expressed towards Dr. Clark, and the author of "Bible News," may be extended towards their Unitarian brethren; and that thus the ecclesiastical division which is threatened may be averted." This may be considered as the basis of the fervid rhapsodies and inflammatory harangues, with which your subsequent pages are filled; and in which to a degree seldom surpassed, you have shewn yourself violent for charity; and "fierce for moderation;" and, with little restraint, have appealed to passions and prejudices to which a wise man, engaged in a good cause, would scarcely, in the most desperate extremity, refer for a decision, or apply for aid. In the course therefore of my remarks, in relation to this passage, I shall have occasion to take notice of the most important of the many exceptionable things, which in your varied strains of declamation you have so copiously poured forth.

* Watts.—Sermon on Atonement.

Charity ought undoubtedly to be extended to every class of Unitarians, and to all men. But what is CHARITY? It is love—holy love:—such as the everlasting Father manifested, when he gave his Son for the redemption of our ruined race; such as Jesus Christ displayed, when he “bore our sins in his own body on the tree,” and “tasted death for every man;” such as the apostles exhibited, when they made a voluntary sacrifice of every earthly consideration, for the sake of bringing men to the knowledge and acknowledgement of the truth, that they might be saved. But with all his infinite love, God has never regarded the errors of mankind as either innocent or safe; but with awful majesty has borne his decided testimony against them, and declared that the children of men have all gone aside, that destruction and misery are in their ways, and that he will bring to nought the wisdom of this world. Jesus Christ also, though possessed of the same infinite love, has solemnly testified, that “men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil;” that “the world hates both him and his Father;”—hates also his true followers, “because they are not of the world, but he has chosen them out of the world.”* And he exercised perfect *charity* when he said, “Wo unto you, scribes, and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, nor suffer them that are entering to go in.—Ye build the tombs of the prophets and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in days of our fathers we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.”†—“Ye are of the world.—If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”‡—It was in the spirit of pure and fervent *charity*, that the devoted apostle of the Gentiles so solemnly averred: “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites.”—“For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according

* John iii, 19; vii, 7; xv, 17, 18, 24.

† Matt. xxiii, 13—33.

‡ John viii, 24.

to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."* In the same charitable spirit, he said to the Galatians, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel: which is not another: but there are some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ."—"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth." "I would that they were even cut off that trouble you."† And in the same holy love, he declared to the Corinthians, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;"‡—exhorted the Romans, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them;"§—warned the Colossians, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ;"¶—and charged Timothy, "to war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck. Of whom," he says, "are Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."**—The disciple also, whom Jesus loved was in the exercise of the most enlarged and elevated *charity*, when he wrote as follows: "Little children, there are many antichrists:—but ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you, because ye know not the truth; but because ye know it, and that no lie, [no false doctrine] is of the truth."—"Beloved, believe not every spirit; but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.—They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."—"Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He

* Rom. ix, 1—4; x, 2, 3.

† Gal. i, 6—9; iii, 1; v, 12.

‡ 1 Cor. i, 23.

§ Rom. xvi, 17.

¶ Col. ii, 8.

** 1 Tim. i, 18—20.

that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.”*

This, Sir, is genuine—divine charity:—charity, which can discern between truth and error; which rejoiceth in the truth, and in the light, the happiness, and the holy fellowship of those who embrace and obey it; and, while it rejects and condemns error, deeply deplores the darkness, the danger, and the delusive communion of those who yield to its fascinations, and ardently desires and seeks their conviction and salvation:—which adores the Lord Jesus with a reverence too holy to trifle with his sacred institutions, and regards all men with an affection too benevolent to cheer them in the ways of destruction. Yes, genuine charity *rejoiceth in the truth*. It is essentially love of truth; and it regards God and Christ, saints and sinners, all beings and things, according to truth. It delights in truth as the foundation of all pure religion, genuine virtue, and substantial happiness;—as of the first importance to the essential and everlasting interests of mankind. In all ages of the world, therefore, it has been the grand effort of charity to convince men of their errors, to rescue them from their delusions, and to bring them to the knowledge of the truth. In this arduous work, it has endured the contradictions and reproaches, the unappeasable resentments and varied persecutions, of the erring, and proud, and adverse world. The palms and crowns, which distinguish the hosts of holy martyrs before the throne of God and the Lamb, were all won by the labours, and sufferings, and conflicts of charity, in maintaining, defending, and propagating the truth upon the earth.

How different from this, in its nature and in its labours, is the misnamed charity for which you contend;—a charity which is fondly indulgent to all error, and inimical only to the truth; which consists in thinking or admitting that men may be good and acceptable in the sight of God, though they utterly reject the gospel as a “cunningly devised fable,” and

* 1 John ii, 18—27; iii, 1—6; 2 John 9—11.

ought to be held in *christian* fellowship, if they only acknowledge that "Jesus is the Christ," though they disbelieve, and condemn every essential doctrine of christianity. This spurious charity, it ought to be distinctly noted, may be possessed, in its utmost extent, by the most unholy men; by infidels of every species of disbelief,—by libertines of every degree of licentiousness. It is an indisputable fact, that the open scoffers at religion, the "lovers of their own selves," the "proud," the "blasphemers," the "covetous," the "fierce," the "despisers of them that are good," can shew as much of this sort of charity, and clamour as loudly for it, as the very best of your liberal christians. Listen to the pagan writers with whom the primitive christians had to contend,—to the free-thinkers, deists, and atheists of modern times,—to the "unruly and vain-talkers," the "murmurers and complainers," who "speak evil of things that they understand not," and utter "great swelling words of vanity:"—all these, while they strenuously oppose all the efforts of holy love, both divine and human, to reclaim men from "the error of their ways unto the wisdom of the just;" yet with one voice cry out for charity and liberality, denounce christians as so uncharitable and illiberal as to deserve the execration of the world, and charge upon them all the guilt of all the divisions, contentions, and persecutions, of which truth and religion have been innocently the occasion.

"Are we blind also?" was indignantly said by some of the masters of Israel to the great Teacher from heaven, who would have "guided their feet into the way of peace." To the inspired apostles, to the successive ministers of Christ, and to others who have been valiant for the truth upon the earth, similar language has been used, and with a similar spirit, in every succeeding age. The pride of man revolts at the imputation of error, and the passions take fire to revenge the alleged insult. To compose and prevent the strife, "the wisdom of this world" has devised and proposed, that all religious truth should be held as matter of mere *opinion*,—that all religious opinions should be entitled to equal favour,—that the acknowledgement of this title should be called *charity*,—and that this charity should be regarded and inculcated as the essence and sum of religion. Were this compact universally

adopted and carried into effect, the world, it is imagined, would be settled in millennial tranquillity, and men would be left, without molestation, to follow their own opinions, to worship their own gods, and to pass on to their final state in their own chosen ways. All therefore who dissent, are to be regarded as common enemies, uncharitable, illiberal, bigotted fanatics,—men who would turn the world upside down, and against whom *charity* calls for a combination of all classes and persuasions. “The system,” you say, “of excluding from christian fellowship men of upright lives, *on account of their opinions*,—necessarily generates perpetual discord in the church.—Thus the wars of christians will be perpetual. Never will there be peace, until christians agree to differ, and agree to look for the evidences of christian character in the temper and the life.” that is, without regard to faith or disbelief. Pages 31—33.

Such, Sir, is the charity for which you contend, which you represent as incomparably more excellent than faith, and to which you make no ordinary pretensions. But, high as your pretensions are, you are eclipsed in this particular, by deists and atheists, by scoffers and libertines.

You seem to be aware, that the apostles were not entirely in this system. You desire, however, that we may “never forget that the apostles were inspired men, capable of marking out with unerring certainty those who substituted another gospel for the true,” p. 27. In this desire I cordially unite with you. It ought certainly never to be forgotten, that they were inspired men; and as little should it be forgotten, that by excluding from fellowship “those, who substituted another gospel for the true,” they made it as certain as the high authority of inspiration could make it, that those who do reject the true gospel and embrace another, however their tempers and lives may appear, are not *entitled* to the privileges of christian communion. This point then is decisively settled.

But you will say, who can now pretend to inspiration, and who, without this gift, has a right to decide what the true gospel is, and what is another. “Show us their [the apostles] successors and we will cheerfully obey them.” Much is to be found to this effect in all your pamphlets: importing that no

uninspired man can know, nor has a right to decide, what the true doctrines of the gospel are, or what are false doctrines; and charging with an arrogant assumption of "infallibility," those, who profess any assurance or certainty, that, in their articles of faith, or their "opinions," they are right. This indeed seems to be the very basis of your system.

Is it however so, that no uninspired man can know, nor has a right to judge what the true gospel of Christ is? For what purpose then were the apostles and the prophets before them inspired? Was it merely for their own benefit? or at most for theirs, and the benefit of others of their own times? For what purpose then were the revelations which were communicated to them, committed to writing, and transmitted with so much care to succeeding generations? Of what use are the scriptures, if no uninspired man can know with any certainty what are the doctrines contained in them?—The celebrated Hume has asserted, that miracles could be of no use, as attestations to a divine revelation, excepting to such as were eye-witnesses of them; because no other persons could have sufficient evidence of the facts. But I believe that even that gigantick adversary of the gospel never went so far as your argument goes: never undertook to assert that a divine revelation, though well attested, could never make any doctrine or truth certain, excepting to inspired men; because no other persons could ever know with any certainty what doctrines or truths are revealed. Had he lighted upon this discovery, he would have found an argument against revelation, incomparably more available than any which he has urged; an argument which, if correct in its premises, must be decisive in its conclusion: for unquestionably a God of infinite wisdom and goodness would never communicate a revelation to the world, for the instruction and faith of uninspired men, if none but the inspired could understand it, or attain to any certainty in regard to its doctrines. Upon this Unitarian principle, inspiration, to answer its purpose, must be continued throughout all ages; just as Hume contended that miracles must be.

This point demands very particular attention, for it is the very hinge on which the question respecting fellowship turns.

Let it then be again distinctly noted, that you have found

yourself compelled to concede, that the inspired apostles did exclude from fellowship those who embraced another gospel, or doctrines or opinions subversive of the gospel of Christ. This establishes the principle decisively, that it would be right to separate from such now, could it only be determined what the gospel of Christ is, and what another gospel. But this, you contend, no uninspired man or body of men has a right to determine. The Unitarian system, as set forth by Mr. Belsham, is clearly opposite, in every essential point, to the orthodox system. Yet no uninspired man has a right to determine, which of these two opposite systems is the true gospel; no one has a right to pronounce either of them false! And, therefore, the believers in either of them have no right to separate from the believers in the other!—If it be really so, then let us hear no more of the great Protestant principle, that *the scriptures are a sufficient rule of faith*; for instead of being a sufficient rule, they are no rule at all. They do not enable or warrant us to decide between two systems, fundamentally and diametrically opposite, which is true, or whether both of them are false. What the gospel of Christ is, no uninspired man can tell. If any undertake to determine, and to pronounce an opposite system another gospel, they are to be regarded as illiberal and uncharitable men, “proud and arrogant” pretenders to “infallibility,” ignorant “bigots,” and odious “persecutors.”

The question respecting fellowship or separation certainly resolves itself into this point. If the scriptures are a sufficient rule of faith, if from them uninspired men can know what the doctrines of Christ are, or what the true gospel is; then they have apostolick, divine authority for withdrawing and withholding fellowship from those, who reject the true, and embrace another gospel. If the scriptures are not a sufficient rule of faith; if no uninspired man can know what the gospel of Christ is; then the “faith of christians is vain, and our preaching also is vain;” and we have yet to wait, in gloomy uncertainty, in dismal darkness, until God in his sovereign goodness shall again bless the world, or some portion of it, with the gift of inspiration.

This cardinal question of the sufficiency of the scriptures ought to be considered, as having been long since decisively settled. It is one of the principal questions which was ardently debated, more than two hundred years ago, between the Protestants and Papists; and it was little to have been expected that, at this time of day, professed Protestants would entrench themselves upon the ground, as Unitarians actually have done,* from which the Papists have been so triumphantly driven. It is however a most striking instance of the *meeting of opposite extremes*: Upon this topick, I can hardly do better, than to present the following quotations from a great champion of the Protestant cause, whose authority on some points you would undoubtedly very highly value.

“I pray tell me,” says Chillingworth, “why cannot Heresies be sufficiently discovered, condemned, and avoided by them which believe scripture to be the rule of faith? If scripture be sufficient to inform us what is the Faith, it must of necessity also be sufficient to teach us what is Heresy; seeing Heresy is nothing but a manifest deviation from, or opposition to the Faith. That which is straight will plainly teach us what is crooked; and one contrary cannot but manifest the other.—Though we pretend not to *certain* means of not erring in interpreting all scripture, particularly such places as are obscure and ambiguous, yet this, methinks, should be no impediment, but that we may have certain means of not erring in and about the sense of those places which are so *plain* and *clear* that they need no interpreters: And in such we say our faith is contained. If you ask me, how I can be *sure* that I know the true meaning of these places? I ask you again, can you be *sure* that you un-

* I am fully aware that the orthodox have been violently charged with a dereliction of this principle, because they make use of creeds; and Unitarians, in opposing creeds, have claimed the honour of “contending for the liberty of being Protestants.” Every well informed person however knows, that the Protestants held the principle, not to the exclusion of creeds drawn from the scriptures, but in opposition to “unwritten tradition” and “papal infallibility.” While they held the scriptures to be the only and sufficient rule of faith, all the Protestant churches had their creeds.—The Unitarian argument, in misapplying the principle, is to this effect: The scriptures are sufficiently full and plain as the rule of faith for all men; therefore no man, or body of men, has a right to say what doctrines the scriptures teach!

derstand what I, or any man else says?—God be thanked that we have sufficient means to be *certain enough of the truth of our faith*. But the privilege of not being in *possibility* of erring, that we challenge not, because we have as little reason as you, to do so; and you have none at all. If you ask, seeing we may possibly err, how can we be *assured we do not*? I ask you again, seeing your eye-sight may deceive you, how can you be *sure* you see the sun when you do see it? Perhaps you may be in a dream, and perhaps you and all the men in the world have been so, when they thought they were awake, and then only awake, when they thought they dreamt.—A pretty sophism this,—that whosoever *possibly may err*, cannot be *certain that he doth not err*. A judge may *possibly* err in judgment; can he therefore never have assurance, that he hath judged right. A traveller may *possibly* mistake his way; must I therefore be doubtful whether I am in the right way from my hall to my chamber.

“Methinks, so subtle a man as you are, should easily apprehend a wide difference between *authority* to do a thing, and *infallibility* in doing it, and again, between a *conditional* infallibility and an absolute. The former, the Doctor, [Potter] together with the Articles of the Church of England, attributeth to the church, nay to particular churches, and I subscribe to his opinion: That is, an *authority* of determining controversies of faith, according to plain and evident scripture, and universal tradition, and *infallibility* while they proceed according to this rule. As, if there should arise an heretick that should call in question Christ’s passion and resurrection, the church had *authority* to decide this controversy, and *infallible* direction how to do it, and to *excommunicate this man*, if he should persist in his error.

“The ground of your erroar here is, your not distinguishing between *actual certainty* and *absolute infallibility*. Geometricians are not *infallible* in their own science; yet they are very certain of those things which they see demonstrated: and carpenters are not *infallible*, yet *certain* of the straightness of those things which agree with their rule and square. So though the church be not *infallibly* certain that in all her definitions, whereof some are about disputable and ambiguous matters,

she shall proceed according to her rule; yet being *certain* of the infallibility of her rule, and that in this and that thing she doth manifestly proceed according to it; she may be *certain* of the truth of some particular decrees, and yet not be certain that she shall never decree but what is true.

“Protestants, believing scripture to be the word of God, may be *certain* enough of the truth and certainty of it. For what if they say the Catholick Church, much more themselves, may err in some unfundamental points, is it therefore consequent, they can be certain of none such? What if a wiser man than I may mistake some obscure place of Aristotle, may I not therefore, without any *arrogance* or inconsequence conceive myself *certain* that I understand him in some plain places which carry their sense before them?—We pretend not at all to any assurance that we *cannot err*, but only to a sufficient certainty that we *do not err*, but rightly understand those things that are plain, whether fundamental or not fundamental.—I do heartily acknowledge and believe the articles of our faith to be in themselves truths as certain and infallible, as the very common principles of geometry or metaphysics.”*

These pertinent and forcible reasonings and remarks, which were long ago employed against the Papists, are now of equal pertinence and force against the Unitarians; and they now as well explain and vindicate the principles and views of the orthodox, as they then did those of the Protestants.

But you say further, p. 27. “It is also important to recollect the *character* of those men, against whom the apostolick anathema was directed. They were men who *knew distinctly* what the apostles taught, and yet opposed it; and who endeavoured to sow division, and to gain followers in the churches which the apostles had planted. These men, resisting the known instructions of the authorized and inspired teachers of the gospel, and discovering a factious, selfish, mercenary spirit, were justly excluded as unworthy the christian name. But what in common with these men, have the christians whom Dr. Worcester and his friends denounce?

* Chillingworth's Works, Chap. ii, Sec. 127, 145, 152, 160, 162. Chap. iii, Sec. 26, 50.

Do these oppose what they *know* to be the doctrine of Christ and his apostles?"

I ask you, sir, *how* those men "*knew distinctly*" what the apostles taught? We have now the writings of the apostles, the same which were then communicated to the churches; but, according to you and your friends, no uninspired man can know distinctly what they teach. Were those, who resisted the *known* instructions of the authorised and inspired teachers of the gospel, themselves inspired men? If not, what right have you to say that they knew what the apostles taught, any better than uninspired men now may know? Will you say that, besides having the writings of the apostles, they had the advantages of hearing the apostles preach and converse? How do you know that such was the fact with all, if it were with some of them? Besides, if the apostles could not write intelligibly, who shall say that they could preach or converse intelligibly? It should seem indeed, that the adversaries of Paul and his doctrine dreaded his writings more than his preaching and conversation. "His letters, said they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."

But further, if those men did know distinctly what the apostles taught, did they however know that the apostles were "inspired" men? Is it not on the contrary certain, that of Paul in particular, they denied both the inspiration and apostolick commission? Will you take it upon you to say, that in this they were not honest? Paul himself, while a zealous pharisee, *verily thought*, notwithstanding all "the signs and wonders" which had been exhibited, that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Why then might not those false teachers and others who opposed themselves to Paul, verily think that they ought to oppose him and his doctrine?

If there is any force in what you state upon this point, it lies in this assumption: that those whom the apostles excluded from fellowship, as false christians and hereticks, were guilty of opposing and rejecting doctrines, which they knew to have been delivered under the authority of divine inspiration; and on this account were "justly excluded as unworthy

the christian name:" but now there are no such characters,—none who reject or oppose what they know to be divinely revealed truth. Here, as in other parts of your writings, you seem to take it for granted, that mankind are much better now, than they were in the days of the apostles. *Then* their depravity was such, that they would deny and resist what they knew to be divine truth ; but *now*, no man will do this. What warrant have you for this assumption? What evidence that the heart is not now as "deceitful and desperately wicked" as ever it was? If men could once reject what they knew to be the truth of God, why may they not now?

Is it however certain, that the opposers of Jesus and his apostles, all of them if any, rejected what they knew to be divine truth? On the contrary, is it not evident, that, in most instances at least, though the evidence before them was clear and abundant, yet they found means to make themselves believe, that Jesus and his apostles were not "authorized and inspired teachers," and that the doctrines taught by them were not true. Jesus upon the cross prayed, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Paul testifies that "had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; and of himself says," that what he did, while "breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," he "*did ignorantly in unbelief.*" It was generally so, no doubt, with those who opposed the truth in those ancient days. It is just so now. It will hardly be denied, by any considerate man, that, in christian lands, the advantages for knowing the truth are as great now, as they were in Judea, or in any part of the world, in the days of Christ and his apostles. Where then is the mighty difference between those who now reject the truth, and those by whom it was then rejected. And if such were not then entitled to the privileges of christian fellowship, by what reasoning, or by what sophistry can it be made to appear, that they are now entitled to these privileges.

The apostles, by your own admission, excluded them: and it is not to be forgotten, that they enjoined it also upon the churches to exclude them. Many passages to this effect have already been cited, and many more might be adduced. The

primitive churches, though not composed of inspired men, yet thought themselves warranted to judge of doctrines whether they were true or false; and accordingly, in conformity to apostolick example and direction, withdrew themselves from those who rejected, or essentially corrupted the gospel. Some of them indeed were more faithful in this respect than others; and in his solemn addresses to the churches in Asia, "He who walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks," particularly commended the more faithful, and severely rebuked the more negligent. And I hold it to be a fact, which ought not to be controverted, that, in all succeeding ages, the purest and best churches, those which have shone as the brightest lights in the world, have been the most steadfast in the apostolick practice,—the most faithful in keeping separate from those, "who would pervert the gospel of Christ."

Yet you say, p. 27, "It is truly wonderful, if excommunication for supposed error be the method of purifying, that the church has been so long and so wofully corrupted. Whatever may have been the deficiencies of christians in other respects, they have certainly discovered no criminal reluctance in applying this instrument of purification." And in this connexion you employ an elegance of imagery, worthy of being applied to a much better purpose, together with a vehemence of reproach, similar to what is often to be met with in the writings of the avowed enemies of christianity. For myself however, I am firmly persuaded that it is to be attributed, not to undue strictness, but to a criminal laxation of discipline, that "the church has been so long and so wofully corrupted." Owing to this laxation, the corrupters of the gospel have found it easy to introduce and intrench themselves within the sacred pale; and seizing upon the gates and fortresses of the holy city, have made themselves strong, have cast down the truth to the ground, have worn out the saints of the Most High, and have practised and prospered, until they have "rendered the records of the christian community as black, as bloody, as revolting to humanity, as the records of empires founded on conquest and guilt."

You contend nevertheless, p. 28, that mistake in judgment is the heaviest charge which one denomination has now a

right to urge against another, and you ask, "Do we find that the apostles ever denounced mistake as 'awful and fatal hostility' to the gospel, that they pronounced anathemas on men, who wished to obey, but who misapprehended their doctrines?" It is already, I trust, sufficiently evident, that the nature and general character of mankind are not so different now from what they were in the apostles' days, as you seem to suppose; that there is no such difference between the cases of those professed christians, who then opposed and perverted the gospel, and those who now do the same, as you represent. If mistake in judgment is the heaviest charge, which they justly incur now, it is the heaviest which they justly incurred then.—Do you imagine, Sir, that those whom the apostles "denounced and excluded," made no pretensions to sincerity, no professions of "a wish to obey" the gospel? Do not the apostles testify that the false teachers, on whom "they pronounced anathemas," *transformed themselves into the apostles of Christ?* And is it not abundantly manifest, that they made very lofty pretensions to sincerity and virtue, *and by good words and fair speeches deceived the hearts of the simple?* Even the immediate opposers of Christ, on whom he pronounced his heaviest woes, claimed to have God, even "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob," for their Father, and in their zeal for God, opposed and rejected his doctrines as blasphemous. There is no evidence to show, nor reason to believe, that the adversaries of the truth were not as sincere, as candid, as virtuous, and as respectable, in the first days of the gospel, as they are in the present age; and might as justly claim exemption from every charge, heavier than that of "mistake in judgment."

This however was not the heaviest charge which was urged against them. To those who claimed to have God for their father, and who were fair and "beautiful" in outward appearance, the mild and benevolent Jesus said, "I know you that ye have not the love of God in you. Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep. *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?*" And he declared that they had "both seen and hated both him and his Father." All this, you

will please to observe, was said of the pharisees, rabbins, rulers, and priests, those who “devoted themselves to the study of the scriptures,” and were regarded by one another, and by the world, as “the eminent, the enlightened, and the good.”

I quote these testimonies of the “faithful and true Witness” as a specimen, not to intimate that “fallible men” should rashly apply or use similar language, but to shew in what light He who “knows what is in man,” views an obstinate disbelief of the truth. Far from regarding it as mere mistake in judgment, he traces it home to an evil heart. Accordingly he declares in general terms, that “men love darkness rather than light, *because their deeds are evil.*” The inspired Paul also says, “If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; *in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*” And he represents natural men as “having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, *because of the blindness of their hearts.*” To this evil source, this moral depravity, the scriptures constantly refer disbelief and rejection of the truth. Nor do they at all limit this affecting representation to the early times of the gospel. On the contrary, the spirit of prophecy most abundantly foretold, that errors, proceeding from the same corrupt source, would abound in times then future and distant; and that the last ages of the world would, in this respect, be eminently perilous: that men would “turn away from the truth, not enduring sound doctrine:” and that false doctrines would be propagated in such a manner, by such men, and with such pretensions, as would “deceive, were it possible, the very elect.”

And is it not most evident, that all which is proud and haughty, and corrupt, in the nature of fallen mankind, will, in every age, resist the truth of God?—particularly those humbling doctrines which declare, that “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked,” that “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” that men can be justified no otherwise, than “freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom

God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood;" and those which transcend the comprehension of human reason, the trinity of persons in the Godhead,—the union of the divine with human nature in the person of Christ, and the expiation of the sins of the world, by his one offering of himself. And is it not equally evident, that all that is self-sufficient, and arrogant, and subtile in man, will employ all the resources of "philosophy and vain deceit," to corrupt, to discredit, and to subvert doctrines to which the heart is so decidedly adverse?

Still, however, you strenuously insist, p. 29, "Whatever may be the right of christians as to bearing testimony against *opinions* which they deem injurious, I deny that they have any right to pass a condemning sentence on the *characters* of men whose general deportment is conformed to the gospel of Christ. Both scripture and reason unite in teaching that the best and only standard of character is the life: and he who overlooks the testimony of a good life, and grounds a sentence of condemnation on opinions, about which he as well as his brother may err, violates most flagrantly, the duty of just and candid judgment, and opposes the peaceful and charitable spirit of the gospel."

By the "condemning sentence" of which you here speak, I understand you to mean the sentence of excommunication, or non-communion; and the principal sentiment of the passage, stripped of its adventitious circumstances, is, that christians have not a right to exclude any from their fellowship on account of erroneous opinions, or, in other words, on account of their corrupting or denying any doctrines of the gospel. It is, however, an indisputable fact, as has before been shewn, that christians have always, from the days of the apostles to the present, held and exercised this as a right and as a duty. And I ask you, Sir, do not even Unitarians, do not you yourself claim and exercise this right? Is there no case in which you would exclude a man from christian fellowship on account of erroneous opinions? In your remarks on my second letter, p. 19, you say, "We are convinced from laborious research into the scriptures, that the great truth, which is the object of christian belief, and which in the first ages con-

ferred the character of disciples on all who received it, [is simply this, that *Jesus is the Christ, or anointed by God to be the light and Saviour of the world.* Whenever this great truth appears to us to be sincerely acknowledged, whenever a man of apparent uprightness declares to us his reception of Jesus in this character, and his corresponding purpose to study and obey his religion, we feel ourselves bound to give him the hand of christian fellowship.”—Be it even so. There is then, however, one article of faith, which you hold essential to christian fellowship; an article which you have ascertained by “laborious research.” Should one, who denies the great truth that *Jesus is the anointed by God to be the light and Saviour of the world*, request the privileges of fellowship in your church, however fair his character in other respects might be, he could not be admitted. He would be refused simply on account of his *opinion*. And for the same reason, should a member of your church, a man of apparent uprightness, avow his disbelief that *Jesus is the Christ*, if you and your church acted consistently with your declared principle, he would be excluded from your fellowship.

But why should you exclude him? why exclude a man for his error in this one particular? I suppose the plain truth to be this: You would hold that he may be a *good man*, and go to heaven, though he disbelieve that Jesus is the Christ,* and deny divine revelation altogether. Yet you would say, that he cannot be a *christian*, unless he believe that Jesus is the Christ, the anointed by God to be the Light and Saviour of the world. But why not? He may acknowledge, as many infidels have done, that Jesus Christ was a man of preeminent excellence of character, and the best moral teacher or philosopher, that ever appeared in the world; may “declare, with apparent uprightness, his corresponding purpose to study and obey his religion;” and may wish to call himself, and to be called a *christian*, for the same reason that the followers of Plato were called Platonists, and others have been called after the names of the philosophers or teachers, whom they have respectively chosen for their masters. Still, however,

* Notwithstanding Jesus has said, “*If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*”

you may say, he denies the church and its ordinances to be of divine institution, and it would be a profanation for him to participate in them? Why so? Though he denies them to be of divine appointment, he nevertheless acknowledges them to be institutions of Jesus Christ, whom he acknowledges as his master; institutions eminently conducive to the improvement of the social virtues and to the good of society; and he is therefore sincerely desirous of participating with other good christians in them.

Why then, I repeat it, should you refuse him? Why after all is it so very important, that he should believe that Jesus is the Christ, the anointed by God?

You will not I presume insist, that the case now supposed is such an one as does not and cannot exist? Are there not many, who stand almost precisely upon this ground? Is it not so with some who are called deists or infidels? Is it not so with those unitarians, in Germany and elsewhere, who deny special divine inspiration altogether,—deny that Jesus is the *Messiah of the Old Testament*,—deny that he was, in any special or proper sense, *anointed by God to be the Light and Saviour of the world*; and yet call themselves christians!

What will you do with these men? If you admit them to christian fellowship, you must give up what, after “laborious research into the scriptures,” you hold to be the single essential article of the christian faith; that which alone “confers the character of disciples on all who receive it.” If you refuse them, you incur the guilt of the heinous crime of excluding from fellowship, on account of *opinion*, or of what you otherwise call, mere mistake in judgment.—If you say you do not “pass a condemning sentence on their *characters*,” I reply, then neither do we on the *characters* of those whom we exclude: and I refer you to what I have said on this topic, in the 24th page of my second letter. You do however pronounce a sentence importing distinctly, that the excluded persons are not christians; for it is upon the very principle, that they deny that article of faith, which alone “confers the character of disciples,” that you exclude them. This is more than, in ordinary cases of withholding or withdrawing fellowship, *we* pronounce.

The difference then between you and us in regard to fellowship, is not that we exclude on account of *opinion*, and you do not; but it is this: you hold it necessary, only that a person believe that *Jesus is the Christ*; we hold it necessary, that he also believe in the *essential doctrines of Christ's religion*. By what authority you make your specified article the only essential article of the christian faith, after some "research into the scriptures," and after perusing with some attention your great authority, Locke, I am still unable to see. Was it for the denial of this article, and this only, that the apostles pronounced their anathemas? Did the false teachers who troubled the churches of Galatia and Corinth, did Hymeneus and Alexander, did those "many antichrists" of whom the apostle John speaks, deny that Jesus was the Christ? No: but they were excluded for errors of a very different kind. What would you think of the man, who should call himself a Platonist, merely because he acknowledges Plato to have been a great philosopher, while at the same time he denies all the essential doctrines of the Platonick system? Please to answer the question; and then apply the answer to the man, who professes to be a christian, merely because he acknowledges Jesus to be the Christ, and yet denies all the essential doctrines of the christian system.

How, after reconsidering the subject, you will decide respecting those, who deny your one essential article, I know not, nor am I greatly concerned to know. At present, however, according to your own account, you have your *creed*, as well as we ours; a short one indeed, as one of your respectable friends has eloquently expressed it, "*contained in one bright line*;" yet a creed which is *exclusive*! Yes, Sir, you yourselves do the very thing, which you so vehemently condemn in us! *You exclude from christian fellowship on account of opinion!*

What then becomes of all your rhetorical declamations, your inflammatory invectives, your violent charges of persecution? They might all be retorted with all their force upon yourselves. Such characters as I have described, by whatever name they may be called, might adopt your own language, and with equal pertinency and modesty, say,

“For” ourselves, we “know not a shadow of pretence for the language of superiority assumed by” Mr. Channing “and his brethren. Are they exempted from the common frailty of our nature? Has God given them superior intelligence? Were they educated under circumstances more favourable to improvement than those whom they condemn? Have they brought to the scriptures more serious, anxious, and unwearyed attention? Or do their lives express a deeper reverence for God? No. They are fallible, imperfect men, possessing no higher means, and no stronger motives for studying the word of God than their” excluded “brethren.” Our “offence is, that we read the scriptures for” ourselves, and derive from them “a different opinion on” one “point,” from that which others have adopted. Mistake of judgment is our pretended crime, and this crime is laid to our charge by men who are liable to mistake as “ourselves,” and who seem to “us” to have fallen into “one” of the grossest errors.* A condemning sentence from such judges carries in it no terror. Sorrow for its uncharitableness, and strong disapprobation of its arrogance, are the principal feelings which it inspires.” Pages 25, 26.

Not only, Sir, do you exclude from christian fellowship, on account of *opinion*, but on account of *opinion* you also pass “a condemning sentence” directly “on the *characters* of men,”—of men too, I think it right to say, “whose general deportment is conformed to the gospel of Christ.” Here, in addition to the passages just quoted, and which were by you

* Trinitarians appear to you and your brethren, you say, “to have fallen into some of the *grossest errors*.” In another place, p. 16, you tell us, that our “*additions* to the simple gospel seem to you at least as exceptionable as the *deficiencies*” of Dr. Priestly and Mr. Belsham. And, p. 22, you say, “I am persuaded, that *at the last day the Trinitarian will be found in a great error*, and were I disposed, I could make as moving an appeal to his fears, as Dr. Worcester can make to ours.” I do not know very well how to reconcile, with these and other similar representations, the following passages: “It is from *deep conviction*, that I have stated *once and again*, that the differences between Unitarians and Trinitarians lie *more in sounds, than in ideas*,” &c. “Trinitarians, indeed, are apt to consider themselves at an immeasurable distance from Unitarians. The reason, I think, is, that they are surrounded with a mist of obscure phraseology. Were this mist dispersed, I believe that they would be surprised at discovering *their proximity to the quarter of the Unitarians*,” &c. Pages 22, 23. One would think that this “mist” might be “dispersed”—“at the last day.”

applied to the orthodox, I must be permitted to present a few more select quotations from your remarks.—“It is truly astonishing, you say, that christians are not more impressed with the unbecoming spirit, the *arrogant* style, of those, who deny the christian character to professed and exemplary followers of Jesus Christ, because they differ in opinion on some of the most subtle and difficult subjects of theology. A stranger, at hearing the language of these *denouncers*, would conclude without a doubt, that they were clothed with *infallibility*, and were appointed to sit in judgment on their brethren. This is the fashionable mode of bearing testimony, and it is a weapon which will always be most successful in the hands of the *proud*, the *positive*, and *overbearing*, who are most impatient of contradiction, and *have least regard to the rights of their brethren*. Persecution is a wrong or injury inflicted for opinions, and surely assaults on character fall under this definition. Some persons seem to think that persecution consists in pursuing error with fire and sword; and that therefore it has ceased to exist, except in distempered imaginations, because no class of christians among us is armed with these terrible weapons. But, no. The form is changed, but the spirit lives. Persecution has given up its halter and faggot, but it *breathes venom from its lips, and secretly blasts what it cannot openly destroy*. Of all earthly blessings, an honest reputation is to many of us the most precious; and he who robs us of it is *the most injurious of mankind, and among the worst of persecutors*. *Let not the friends of denunciation attempt to escape from this charge*, by pleading their sense of duty, and their sincere desire to promote the cause of truth. *St. Dominic was equally sincere*, when he built the inquisition. Humble, meek, and affectionate christians are least disposed to make creeds for their brethren, and to denounce those who differ from them. On the contrary, *the impetuous, proud, and enthusiastick, men who cannot or will not weigh the arguments of opponents*, are always most positive and unsparing in denunciation. They take the lead in a system of exclusion. They have no false modesty, no false charity, to shackle their zeal in framing fundamentals for their brethren, and in punishing the obstinate

in error. The consequence is, that creeds are formed which exclude from Christ's church some of his truest followers, which outrage reason as well as revelation. *Such has been the history of the church.*" Pages 25—34.

Such, Sir, is the sort of language, which you employ with such frequency, such ease, and such assurance, as clearly indicate the practice to be habitual with you. I am afraid also that no small portion of your "liberal" friends are so accustomed to similar language and similar feelings, as to have read these passages, and others of the kind in your pamphlets, with no other emotions than those of pleasure and exultation; not suspecting in the least, that the spirit of them is not perfectly "candid," and "liberal," and "charitable," and "mild," and "affectionate," and "modest," and "meek," and "humble."

But is there not here "a condemning sentence passed" directly "on the *characters* of men?"—a sentence of absolute destruction! The characters here described are sentenced as destitute of "modesty" and of "charity;"—as "*the proud,*" "*the impetuous,*" the "arrogant," "*the enthusiastick;*"—as either "not able, or not willing to weigh the arguments of opponents;"—as "most positive and most unsparing of denunciation;"—as "having the least regard to the right of their brethren;"—as "denouncers," possessing "*the spirit of persecution,*" which, though it "has given up its halter and faggot," yet "*breathes VENOM from its lips, and SECRETLY BLASTS what it cannot openly destroy;*"—as characters who shall in vain "attempt to escape from the charge" of being "the MOST INJURIOUS OF MANKIND, and among THE WORST OF PERSECUTORS."

Was ever a more "condemning sentence passed on the *characters* of men?" Is it possible for one *more condemning* to be passed on the very worst of men,—the most execrable malignants, and miscreants, that ever troubled the world!

Upon whom is this sentence passed? Not upon the reviewers and the writer of the letters to Mr. Channing only; not upon the orthodox ministers and christians of this country and of the present age only; but upon the great body of the christian church of all nations and of all ages! You "beg,"

indeed, that it “may not be applied indiscriminately to the party called orthodox, among whom,” you are pleased savingly to say, “there are multitudes whose humility and charity would revolt from making themselves the standards of christian piety, and from assailing the christian character of their brethren.” It does, however, from the very terms of it, apply to all of every nation and age, who have adhered to *creeds*, and refused fellowship on account of *opinions*. Where, among orthodox christians, the “multitudes” are to be found, who do not fall within this description, it would not, I believe, be very easy to point out.

You will not deny that *creeds* were used in the early periods of the church. What is called the Apostles’ Creed, if it were not set forth by the apostles themselves, is however historically traced up nearly or quite to the apostolick age, as having been then used in the churches with little or no exception. It is equally certain, that in those purest and brightest days of the church, it was held by all christians right, and a sacred duty, to note as hereticks, and to exclude from fellowship, those who denied or corrupted the essential doctrines of the gospel. Afterwards the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds were used along with the Apostles’, generally, and with exclusive effect, in the orthodox churches. In the age of the Reformation, the Protestant churches, Lutheran, Zuinglian, Calvinian, or by whatever name distinguished; all had their creed, and excluded from fellowship those who denied their essential articles. And it has been so with the orthodox churches generally, from that day to the present.

It is also a well attested fact, that, by the great body of christians, from the days of the apostles to the present, the deniers of the Trinity, or of the proper Deity and atonement of Jesus Christ, Unitarians of various names, have been regarded as being eminently subverters of the gospel; and as little doubt has been entertained of the duty of withholding fellowship from them, as from any who have called themselves christians. About two hundred years ago indeed the celebrated Episcopius made it a question, whether they might not, consistently with the gospel, be admitted to the fellowship of orthodox churches. But the question, after ardent,

and powerful debate, on the Continent and in England, was decided in the negative; and in that decision, the orthodox churches, with great unanimity, have ever since rested.

I am then fully warranted in saying, that your condemning sentence applies to the great body of the church of Christ of all ages and nations. Indeed you yourself very explicitly give it this extensive application when you say, with significant emphasis, "*Such has been the history of the church.*" Especially does it apply to those, who, in successive periods, have been the most distinguished in "the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,"—who have contended with the most holy charity and zeal for the faith once delivered to the saints, by whose labours and sufferings the religion of the gospel has been, instrumentally, maintained and propagated,—of whom the world has not been worthy,—but whose "witness is in heaven and their record on high."—And, my dear Sir, it is with no common feelings of grief, that I find myself compelled to say, that a heavier sentence than yours, against the disciples of the Lord, against "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth," has never, I believe, been pronounced, by the bitterest of enemies, either pagan or infidel.

But why are the servants of the Most High thus condemned? *Because they have thought it right not to extend christian fellowship to such as have denied and sought to subvert, what they hold to be the essential doctrines of their holy religion; doctrines on which they have founded all their hopes of salvation to themselves and their fellow men, and which they have been ready to seal, and in thousands of instances have actually sealed, with their blood.* Yes, Sir, it is for this OPINION of theirs, that you have passed a condemning sentence on their "*characters,*" as "the MOST INJURIOUS OF MANKIND, THE WORST OF PERSECUTORS, BREATHING VENOM FROM THEIR LIPS, AND SECRETLY BLASTING WHAT THEY COULD NOT OPENLY DESTROY! If then, as you say, persecution is a wrong or an injury inflicted for opinions, and assaults on character surely fall under this definition;" I solemnly refer it to your conscience before God, whether you do not stand convicted at your own bar as a *persecutor*.

If you say that the great body of orthodox christians, whom you have thus vehemently condemned, have not only held the obnoxious opinion, but have also expressed it and acted upon it, I shall not deny the charge. But that they have done it in the bitter and violent manner, which you have so frightfully represented, especially in this country, and still more especially "in this quarter of our country," I do utterly deny; and I challenge you to produce any facts to justify in the least your representation. I affirm, with the most assured confidence, that if in any part, or in any period of the world, a spirit of moderation, forbearance, and kindness, has been shewn towards those who have been regarded as subverters or corrupters of the gospel, it has been in this region, and in the present age. Even you yourself acknowledge, that we "talk to you courteously as friends;" but this, in your charity, you choose to represent as "mockery," with an insidious intention to "rivet your chains," and "more irritating than papal bondage." Of the candour of this representation, I have nothing to say; but have only to remark, that, even in the midst of your violent invectives, you have reluctantly made, at an unguarded moment, an acknowledgement of a fact, known and read of all men: the fact, that instead of the *venom* and "outrage," which, from the general strain of your declamation, "a stranger" would suppose you had experienced, you have actually been treated by these "most injurious of mankind," with great courtesy and kindness,—with great tenderness for your *characters*, and care for the preservation of peace. But the "coals of fire which have thus been heaped upon your heads," have served, it should seem, only to "irritate."

If, however, the orthodox have expressed their *opinion* respecting fellowship, and acted upon it, is it not also true, that those, from whom they have withheld fellowship, have likewise expressed their erroneous opinions, and acted agreeably to them? Doubtless there have always been men who have thought it prudent to conceal their opinions. Only, however, when their opinions have been avowed, and acted out, have the erroneous, on account of their errors, been excluded. It has been because, that from their opinions, words

have proceeded, which "eat as doth a canker," and deeds which tend to the subversion of the gospel, that they have been placed out of communion.

But you say, "Both scripture and reason unite in teaching that the best and only standard of *character* is the *life*." "The whole scriptures teach that he, and he only is a christian, whose *life* is governed by the precepts of the gospel, and that by this standard alone, the profession of this religion should be tried." "Jesus Christ says, 'By their *fruits* shall ye know them.'" I have no difficulty in acceding to this statement. I certainly hold, and wish to be understood to hold, that the best and only standard of character, is the *life*;" that "he, and he only is a christian, whose life is governed by the precepts of the gospel, and that men are to be "known by their fruits." If, however, you mean, as it is evident you do, that in estimating or determining christian character, a man's opinions, his faith or his disbelief, are not at all to be taken into the account; I can assure you, I have not so learned Christ.

The scriptures throughout earnestly and authoritatively insist on *faith*, humble, hearty *belief of the truth*, as essential to *christian character*. The christian *life* is a life of *faith*. The *fruits* by which the christian is to be known are the fruits of *faith*. Christians are *believers*. They are *sanctified through the truth*. Their hearts are *purified by faith*. Such is the doctrine of scripture.

If a man discard the gospel altogether, as a cunningly devised fable, however fair and commendable in other respects his *life* may be, you will hardly yourself, I suppose, find in him the *christian* character. If then a man acknowledges the gospel to be from God, and even makes a formal profession of christianity, and yet, instead of believing, loving, steadfastly maintaining, and seeking to promote the great and essential truths of the gospel, disbelieves, hates, opposes, and endeavours to discredit and obstruct them; though he may be eminently what the world calls honest, and benevolent, and amiable, and virtuous; yet must not his christian character be materially and eminently defective? Is it not manifest, that "his life is" not "governed by the precepts of the gos-

pel?"—particularly those leading precepts, which require him to receive the truth in love,—to obey the truth, to walk in the truth,—to do nothing against the truth,—to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints,—to shine as a light in the world, *holding forth the word of life*? These *christian fruits* are certainly wanting in him; and fruits of an opposite kind,—fruits as bitter as the "grapes of Sodom, and the clusters of Gomorrah," are exhibited.—If he be a professed minister of the gospel, and in addition to the particulars now mentioned, instead of speaking the true gospel of Christ, and declaring all the counsel of God, he preach another gospel, or doctrines subversive of the truth, and employ all the advantages of his publick station, and all the influence of his sacred and engaging character, in counteracting the faithful ministers of Christ, representing their steadfast adherence to the truth as bigotry, their earnest defence of the gospel as illiberality, their labours to prevent the spread of the pernicious effects of error, as persecution, their zeal for the honour and cause of Christ, as party spirit, and their measures for advancing his kingdom, and extending his salvation, as projects of ambition;—what must we say or think of his *life*? Is it governed by the precepts of the gospel? "*Beware*," says He who came down from heaven to guide our feet into the way of peace, "*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing.—Ye shall know them by their FRUITS.*"

"False teachers would pretend extraordinary endowments of *Learning* perhaps, or *Sanctity*, or *Piety*, and an affectionate concern for the happiness of those whom they should address themselves to. But they might be detected by *their fruits*. For if their doctrine should be found contrary to the doctrine of Christ, that is *conviction* at once, and all their glozing pretences are worth nothing. They are *false prophets*, because their *doctrines* are *false*. What can be a plainer proof of it? Neither is it any objection to this, that our Lord afterwards speaks of *doing the will of his Father*, and of *working iniquity*: for maintaining the *truth*, is *doing God's will*; and corrupting or resisting it, is *working iniquity*. Therefore, let this be *included* at least among other *bad fruits*, other *works of iniquity*. We will allow that an *heretick* in matters of mere *revelation*, is not so bad a man, generally speaking, as an *heretick* in *morality*; but still he may be a

much worse man, or, to speak plainer, may do a great deal more *mischief* by his *doctrine*, than the *immoral* man may do by his *example*. For besides his propagating *dangerous* errors, subverting souls, it is farther to be considered, that he sets himself up as a *rival* teacher, in opposition to the faithful ministers of Christ. He weakens their hands, frustrates their pious labours, perverts their flocks, gives the common enemy a handle to insult and blaspheme, raises a kind of flame and war in the church, and remotely administers, to all immorality and dissoluteness of manners, by taking off the influence of the best instructions. Religion is not a *personal* thing, which every man may new model or alter for himself. It is the joint patrimony of the whole community; and every man more or less is accountable to his neighbour for any *waste* made in it. That *corrupting* the *faith* is not an *innocent* practice, but a very ill thing, every one knows, or ought to know. I speak not of mere mistakes in judgment, but of *espousing* and *propagating* them; corrupting the faith in important articles, and diffusing such corruptions. A life so spent, is a *wicked life*, if opposing divine truths, undermining the gospel, and subverting souls, be wicked attempts, as they undoubtedly are.* “Be not deceived, my brethren; those that corrupt families by adultery, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. If therefore they who do this, according to the flesh, have suffered death; how much more shall he die, who by his *wicked doctrine* corrupts the *faith* of God, for which Christ was crucified? He that is thus defiled, shall depart into unquenchable fire, and so also shall he that hearkens to him.”†

The Unitarians, however, according to you, are in no respect wanting in christian character, and have nothing to fear from the judgment of men or of God. We regard other christians,” you say, p. 14, “as brethren, but can in no degree recognize them as superiours in the church of our common Master. We do not dread the censures which they may pass on our honest opinions. We rejoice that we have a higher judge, whose truth it is our labour to learn, obey, and maintain.” Who are these other christians, whom you regard as brethren? Are they the orthodox, whom you have

* Waterland’s Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity, Chap. v.

† St. Ignatius. Epist. to the Eph. The blessed martyr, it should seem, had “learned,” even so early as the apostolick age, what you say I have learned—to “awaken men’s feelings, by addressing their *fears*.” He learned it, I suppose, from the apostles themselves, as the apostles had learned it from Christ.

condemned as “the most injurious of mankind,” “breathing venom from their lips?” Again, p. 20, “It is not because we exalt reason above scripture, but because we revere the scriptures, that we maintain Unitarian principles.”*—P. 25. “It is truly astonishing that christians are not more impressed with the unbecoming spirit, the arrogant style, of those, who deny the christian character to professed *and exemplary followers of Jesus Christ*. P. 28. “Do these oppose what they *know* to be the doctrine of Christ and his apostles? Do they not revere Jesus Christ and his inspired messengers?” P. 33. “This practice of denouncing—exalts to supremacy in the church, men, who have the least claim to influence. HUMBLE, MEEK, and AFFECTIONATE christians, are least disposed to make creeds for their brethren, and to denounce those who differ from them.” Who those arrogant and proud ones are, who, in your estimation, have the least claim to influence, we have before seen. They are the orthodox christians.” The “exemplary followers of Jesus Christ, the humble, meek, and affectionate christians, who have the highest claim to influence, and ought to be exalted to supremacy in the church,”† are the Unitarians. “*They*,” you affirm, p. 25, “*They are deficient IN NONE OF THE QUALIFICATIONS, which were required in the primitive age.*” Orthodox christians, will readily concede, that they have no pretensions to claims like these. Deeply conscious of many and great “deficiencies,” they are far from considering themselves as having “already attained, or being already perfect. “We dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”

* In this passage, you allude, as in the connexion, you do repeatedly, to the statement which I made in my Second Letter of the sentiments and practice of Unitarians, respecting the scriptures; and you treat the subject in that sort of evasive and equivocal manner, to which you are egregiously addicted. You do not, you will not, you cannot, deny the correctness of the statement; yet you obliquely, and querulously refer to it, as if it were incorrect, and varying the aspect of it, would seem to deny it.

† In this commonwealth, you, and your “liberal” brethren are already in “the chief seats.” To what other “supremacy you would wish to be “exalted,” or can well be exalted, until you increase your numbers, or establish a hierarchy, I do not readily see. In other parts of our country, and of the christian world, it must be confessed, it is otherwise. In England, Dr. Priestly, it should seem, ought to have been bishop of St. Asaph’s, instead of Dr. Horsley, Mr. Lindsay or Mr. Belsham, bishop of London, instead of Dr. Porteus, Mr. Wakefield, archbishop of Canterbury, instead of Dr. Moore; and the present dignitaries of the establishment, as they “have the least claim to influence,” ought to resign their places to the Unitarians,—such, and so many as can be found.

In the latter part of your remarks, pp. 36—42, you present a frightful picture of the consequences, which you imagine must result from what you call “the system of exclusion and separation:” that is, the system of non-communion between orthodox christians and Unitarians. It would have been natural to conclude, from the descriptions which you have given of these two classes respectively, that you could neither have wished, nor thought it possible, that any thing like christian fellowship should subsist between them. How can you indeed wish, how can you think it possible that fellowship should subsist between the humble, meek, affectionate, exemplary followers of Jesus Christ, and the proud, the arrogant, the impetuous, the worst of persecutors, and most injurious of mankind, whose venomous breath secretly blasts what they cannot openly destroy! Can the wolves and the sheep dwell together within the same enclosure, in concord, amity, and peace?

You state, however, that “the system of excluding professed disciples of Christ on account of opinions, is incompatible with the great principles of Congregationalism.” In this, as you cannot but be sensible, you differ most widely from the founders of the Congregational churches, whether we consider as the founders the apostles and primitive ministers of Christ, or the leaders of the Puritans in England and in this country. The apostles certainly established the primitive churches upon this system; and upon this system the leaders of the Puritans, and the churches founded by them, uniformly acted. Look into the platforms of these churches, the Savoy, the Cambridge, and the Saybrook; turn over the ecclesiastical records of the primitive times of New England, and proof will accumulate upon proof. The Congregational churches all had their creeds, their confessions of faith, and all held it as their right and their duty, to withhold and withdraw fellowship from all who denied or corrupted the essential articles.

Yet you say, “This system will shake to the foundation our religious institutions, and destroy many habits and connexions which have had the happiest influence on the religious character of this people. The annual convention of Congregational ministers of Massachusetts, that ancient bond of union must be dissolved. The association of ministers in our different counties must in many cases be broken up,

Neighbouring churches will be mutually estranged. In the same church angry divisions will break forth. Many religious societies will be rent asunder, their ministers dismissed, and religious institutions cease. Discord will be carried not only into churches, but into families. The family altar must fall." Such are the direful consequences on which your feverish imagination broods, and to which it has given the most dismal colourings.

Are you not aware, Sir, that this same sort of objection, or of argument, might have been used with equal force, and actually was used, by the Jews against preaching the gospel and establishing christian churches in Judea,—by the Pagans against propagating christianity in the lands where their gods were worshipped,—and by the Papists against the doctrines of the Reformation, and separation from their church. It is a sort of popular argument, which has always been urged against disturbing the corruptions of the world, by the exhibition and defence of the truth. The awful words of our Lord here force themselves into serious recollection. "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother. And a man's foes shall be those of his own household."—"Ultimately indeed I shall establish peace in every sense of the word," and "shall make wars to cease in all the world; but at present, and indeed for many years to come, I shall not bring peace, but a sword upon the earth. The promulgation of my religion will be productive of much dissention, cruelty, and persecution, not only to you, but to all those who, for many ages afterwards, shall preach the gospel in purity and truth. The true *cause* of this will be the wickedness, and the ferocious passions of men; but the occasion and the *pretence* for it will be the holy religion, which you are to promulgate. In this sense, and in this only, it is that I may be said to bring a sword upon the earth; but they who *really* bring it, are the open enemies or *pretended* friends of the gospel."—"He that loveth father or mother, more than me, is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." "That is evidently when the nearest and dearest relations come in competition with our belief in Christ, and obedience to his

commands, our affection for them, and deference to their opinions must give place to love for our Redeemer and attachment to our Maker.”*

But why must these dreadful consequences *now* ensue? The “system” from which you say they must result, is not a new one. It has been in practice from the first ages of the gospel. It has been in practice in our churches from the first settlement of our country. The orthodox churches of New-England, of Massachusetts, have always held it right to separate from those who essentially corrupt the gospel; at no period of our history have they supposed that they ought to be in communion with avowed Unitarians; and if at any time they have been in communion with them, it is because those Unitarians have not been publicly avowed and open.

No Sir; we are not introducing or proposing a *new* system.† We stand upon the “foundation” of our fathers;—the venerable founders of our churches, to whom, under God, we are indebted for our “religious institutions,” and the inval-

* Matt. x, 33—37. Bishop Porteus’s Lecture on the Chapter.

† You say, indeed, that “we are threatened with *new tribunals, or consociations*,” that “it is a melancholy fact, that our long established congregational form of church government is menaced;” and taking your note from the “Layman,” you blow the trumpet of alarm with all your might. Were this the proper place, I should feel myself entitled to speak upon this subject with a degree of freedom and confidence. If I have ever made myself known for any thing, I have for my firm adherence to the principles, my zealous attachment to the liberties of our Congregational churches. In defence of them, my pen was early employed; and in the same cause my feeble voice has been raised in ecclesiastical Councils, in the General Association of Massachusetts, and in the Convention of Congregational Ministers. My opinion and feelings upon the subject remain unchanged.

The “Layman” has committed a mistake. He states that “an obsolete manuscript of Dr. Cotton Mather,—is now attempted to be imposed upon the christian churches of this state, as the rule of their government.” The truth is, that, by the Report of the Committee of the General Association, to which you and he refer, *that ancient document was entirely set aside*; not a scrip of it was retained: and it was set aside for the very reason, that it contained principles incompatible with the rights and liberties of the churches; principles, which, sooner than attempt to impose them upon the churches, the members of that Committee, some of them at least, would have resisted unto blood. All therefore that the Layman has said on this subject, falls to the ground; and with it, what you have said, as you have followed him both in sentiments and words, also falls.

The plan of Consociation, presented by the Committee, I have considered with earnest attention,—have examined and re-examined with anxious scrutiny; and I am free to declare, that I can see nothing in it repugnant to congregational principles, to the Platform, or to the liberties of the churches. On the contrary it does appear to me well calculated to revive congregationalism in its purity, to restore the Platform to its legitimate use, to guarantee to the churches their rights and liberties, and to secure them from those invasions, infringements, vexations, and usurpations, to which, since the Platform has gone so generally into disuse, they have been continually exposed. I may be in an error. The Report however, *agreeably to the express intention and desire of the Committee*, is before the publick for free consideration and discussion. To denounce it as you have done, is more easy than wise. I sincerely hope it will be examined with all the fairness and candour, together with all the faithful scrutiny, and jealous care, which its nature and importance demand. If you or any other man shall make it appear to be uncongregational in its principles, or dangerous to the liberties of the churches in its provisions, I pledge myself to exert whatever I may possess of talent or of influence, to prevent its adoption.

able blessings which have resulted from them to our beloved commonwealth and country. We adhere to their faith and their worship, to their principles and system of ecclesiastical order and discipline; and both the one and the other we wish to maintain and to perpetuate, in their genuine spirit, and with all their benign and salutary influence, as an inheritance to our children and our children's children. *You, not we*, are the *innovators*,—the aggressors,—the assailants. By *you*, not by *us*, are our religious institutions to be shaken to the foundation," and all those direful consequences, which you have so rhetorically represented, are to be produced! Are you and your friends, Sir, *determined* on all this? It should seem, from the portentous signal which you have given, that such is the fact.—Then, indeed, "the time is come, when" all who venerate the religion of their fathers, who love the gospel of Christ, who wish well to the temporal and eternal interests of their fellow-men, "are called to awake, and to remember their duties to themselves, to posterity, and to the church of Christ." To affect to despise your strength or your means, would not be the part of wisdom. We know very well where your seat is. We know that you have established yourselves on the high places of the Commonwealth; and that you possess advantages for exerting an influence as extensive as it may be destructive. We know too that the earthly dispositions and passions of mankind, and the "imagination and high things which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God," are on your side. And we are not unaware how apt many may be to embrace, with little reflection and as little concern, a fashionable religion which has a shew of wisdom, which makes the offence of the cross to cease, which accommodates itself to the spirit of the world.

Are "the slumbering minds of this community," however, prepared for such a change as you contemplate? Are the churches, the ministers, the people of Massachusetts, prepared to yield up, without a struggle, the consecrated faith and worship, the religious and ecclesiastical principles and institutions of their ancestors? Are they prepared to renounce the religion, and place themselves out of the fellowship of the general Church of Jesus Christ, and to embrace a religion,—an unblest religion,—which has never, in any country, or in any age, been admitted to that holy fellowship? Are they prepared publicly to declare against the Divinity and atone-

ment of Him, who is "the propitiation for the sins of the world," and in whose name alone there is salvation for men? to "break his bands asunder, and to cast away his cords from them!"—I trust in God that they are not. I trust, that they that are with us, are more than they that are with you; and that the God of our fathers has not yet forsaken the churches, which they planted with so many prayers, and watered with so many tears. It is devoutly hoped that "reflecting laymen," and all the people, will *open* "their eyes to this subject:" a subject which most deeply concerns both their temporal and eternal interests, and than which no other can have a higher claim to their earnest and serious consideration. I deem it by no means too solemn, to refer them to the awful warning of the second Psalm. "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. *KISS THE SON lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little.*"

I ask however again, why *must* those consequences, so baleful to society, to churches, and to families, ensue? If Unitarians are "humble, meek, affectionate christians," it surely should be little expected, that a spirit of discord, and strife, and animosity, and bitterness, and violence would be displayed by them; and little of such a spirit, I sincerely hope and am firmly persuaded, will be displayed by the orthodox, notwithstanding the heavy accusations which you have brought and may continue to bring against them. I repeat what I said in my Second Letter, and I do it with the utmost sincerity and earnestness: "Though we differ and widely differ in our opinions;—though we engage in debate on most important and interesting points;—though we should find occasion even to separate as to christian fellowship; yet there need not be, there ought not to be, and if our tempers were right there would not be, any bitterness, or wrath, or anger, or clamour, or evil speaking on either side. The gospel teaches us to exercise unfailing charity and good will, not only towards those whom we receive to christian fellowship, but towards all men." Wherever then we *can* meet, let us meet with mutual courtesy and kindness; wherever we can cooperate for any good object, let us amicably and heartily cooperate; and where we must part, let us part in the spirit of peace, and with sincere desires and prayers for each other's good. Yours, Rev. and dear Sir, with affection and respect,

Salem, Dec. 1815.

S. WORCESTER.

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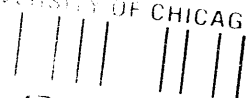
A kind letter to
the Rev. W.E. Channing
Univ. of Iowa

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